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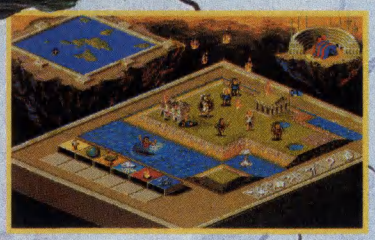

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Buggy Ride

One of the less welcome trends of 1992 has been a sudden proliferation of bugs. These pesky insects have always been with us, of course, but seldom have they struck so frequently and with such venom. Users are understandably miffed and mystified by this sudden swarm. Why, they wonder, should they have to put up with this nonsense after shelling out hard earned notes? Are the beta testers visually challenged? Don't the software houses care what goes out of the door bearing their name? The answers to these questions is as follows:

1. They shouldn't
2. Pass the white stick
3. Yes

Not only should users not have to put up with hung, crashed, and generally unusable games, they won't unless the situation improves. Games are but one item competing for valuable leisure time which, despite the prediction of pundits, seems to be on the decrease. It's doubly essential therefore, that standard of quality control should be extremely keen. Games that are released and which are followed in short order by a series of upgrades do not immediately suggest a such keenness Rather, it suggests a keenness to get the game out of the door at all costs. This isn't good enough. Imagine going to a cinema where the projection systems keeps breaking down. Sure, the management extends an invitation to come back another night but the likelihood is that disgruntled moviegoers will seek to spend their precious time elsewhere. This situation is analogous with upgrades; it's nice when they finally arrive and they do indicate a will on the part of the software houses to 'do the right thing'. But does anyone really want to keep 'coming back another night'?

Poor playtesting must take the responsibility for part of the problem, given the obvious nature of some bugs.The excuse that PC's 'differ so much' does not hold water given the universal and manifest nature of some of the failures and crashes. I'm not talking about minor conflicts with some obscure TSR here, but about malfunctions which prevent games from being completed.

It's not only poor playtesting that is the problem, it's not *enough* playtesting. Of course there is an inter relationship between these two statements, but by 'enough' I mean the actual quantity of the playtesters. Many software houses are loath to employ outside playtesters (for obvious reasons) who could provide a fresh perspective. The result is that full-time employees soon fall victim to the can't-see-the-woods-for-the-trees syndrome.

Do software houses knowingly put out products that are incomplete and contain what are euphemistically referred to as 'undocumented features'. The answer has to be a qualified 'yes'. But why would they do this knowing the long term hurt that will accrue?

Short term cash beats long term hurt anytime, especially in the short term. Many companies have to meet quarterly product and cash quotas with the result that anything in the vicinity of the door come the time, goes out of it at a clip. Not much consolation to John and Jane Gamer.

Of course, this is an appalling state of affairs and one that must cease if the market for games is to be maintained, let alone increased.The unfortunate thing about no-solution rants such as this is that they implicitly lump the innocent with the guilty. Just like bug-ridden games, in fact.

Turning Japanese

Any readers interested in following up Steven Wartofsky's interesting meditation in our last issue on the influence of eroticism in Japanese computer games, should hasten to acquire a copy of the November issue of *The Face (*a UK style magazine) which contains an excellent article on the subject. The same article also tracks the exploits of the *otaku* - a substantial sub culture of high tech drop-outs whose lives revolve solely around the playing of computer games. Glad we don't know anyone like that.

Christmas puddings

The boys and girls at *Strategy Plus* would like to wish our lovely lovely readers a very Merry Christmas and a fab New Year. Same goes for all the software houses that have supported this magazine through thick and thin (mostly thin). May all your turkeys be roasted.❑

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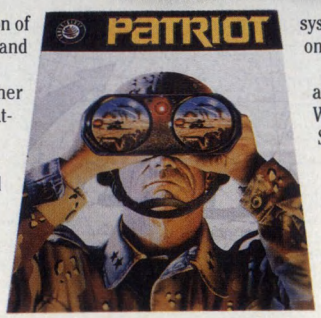

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Spectrum Treks into Malls

'Hi! I'm Counselor Diana Troy. I'll be appearing soon in a mall near you.'

Paramount Pictures, makers of the *Star Trek* series, have entered into a licensing agreement with Edison Brothers Entertainment under which the brothers will develop *Star Trek* virtual reality centres for shopping malls around the country. The software will be supplied by Spectrum Holobyte.

Visitors to the virtual reality centres will be able to choose from a number of game scenarios and the characters they want to portray. Many of the famed elements of the Starship Enterprise - including the bridge, the holodeck, the transporter room and engineering - will be recreated as environments for the various virtual reality attractions. As well as owning and operating more than 2800 speciality stores in all 50 states, Edison Brothers is the exclusive US distributor of Virtuality, the only virtual reality entertainment system currently available to the public.

All in all it's been a pretty good month for Spectrum Holobyte for they also received $4m in funding. The funds have been donated by disparate groups all with an interest in developing the interactive entertainment market. The cash has enabled Spectrum Holobyte to buy all the shares in SWICO, their holding company which was linked to the discredited figure of Robert Maxwell.

mercenaries: psycho killers

Mindcraft Besieged

Mindcraft's hit game **Siege**, will soon be joined by **The Dogs of War**, an expansion disk for the master program which contains six unique castles to conquer as part of 24 new scenarios. New troops with new abilities are also included as well as new beasties. Perhaps the most important new element included is a modem option, an ideal feature for this real-time game.

Another real-time game coming soon from Mindcraft is **Tegel's Mercenaries**, a futuristic war/strategy game with a strong role playing aspect. Played at squad level, the player takes command of a crew of 20 mercenaries, each with a different set of abilities and psychopathical profile. **Tegel's Mercenaries** will also contain a scenario builder enabling players to create their own missions.

Dan Quayle Lost for Words!

Vice President (at the time of writing) Dan Qualye has been linked with Spectrum Holobytes word game, **Wordtris**. Quayle's sensational misspelling of the word 'potato' (you say potato, I'll say potatoe), was corrected by a 12 year old schoolboy, William Figueroa. The youngster has now been appointed National Spokesperson for Spectrum Holobyte's word game, **Wordtris**. Beyond his duties (?) in this capacity, Figueroa will also take part in Spectrum Holybyte's Potato Challenge sweepstakes promotion which will appear in a less famous magazine than this one.

Sierra Shacks up

Famous electronic retailer Radio Shack have announced that they will be selling software for Sierra On Line's TSN on-line entertainment system. The trial membership kit will include free on-line time on the network where players can meet up with opponents for games such as **Red Baron** and **Paintball**. In addition, Radio Shack will also be selling 'special multi-player modem hardware' that will come bundled with entertainment software.

On the release front, Sierra has just released **Kings Quest VII** and **Johnny Castaway**. The latter is a screen saver for Windows designed to prevent 'burn-in' when the user has dozed off after a few hours with Excel for Windows. The unique aspect of this program is that unlike other screen savers, **Johnny Castaway** tells a story. Each time a break is taken a different screen pops up. Will Johnny get off with the mermaid, or will the shark get off with Johnny? Fall asleep at the monitor and find out.

Megafortress Mega Mania

Three Sixty Pacific's **Megafortress**, which was described in the ads as being 'Big Bad and Armed to the Teeth' can now be said to armed right down to the tootsies following the release of the **Megafortress Mega Pack**. The chunky chocolate box contains the master program plus the 1.1 upgrade; the **Operation Sledgehammer Mission Disk**, and the **Mission Editor** which allows the modification of missions as well as the creation of new ones.

Three more huge boxes from Three Sixty contain the PC, Mac and Amiga versions of the **Harpoon Challenger Pak Signature Edition**, the inscriptions in question belong to designer Larry Bond and author Tom Clancy. As valuable as these undoubtedly are, it's worth adding that the 'paks' also contains the master program, and Battlesets 2, 3, and 4 as well as the Harpoon Scenario Editor.

Back to the front, where **V for Victory** fans may care to note that version 2.0 of this program is now available. Purchase of the new **Velikiye Luki** scenario (see preview) will automatically update the program, but anyone bonkers enough not to buy this can obtain the new upgrade from Three Sixty by sending them a check for $5.00.

Down the upgrade path

Siege editor (Public Domain)

This editor will allow players to change troop names, attributes and weapons and will also let allow wizards to pass through walls, fire elementals throw fireballs, make skeleton warriors harder to kill (again), change the names of troop types to recreate battles (for the *Middle Earth* fans) and more. Will only work with version 1.2 Note: this is a Public Domain program and not available from Mindcraft

Spectrum Holobyte

Upgrade for Operation: **Fighting Tiger** to version 3.01.1 This update contains a new installer, a fix for people who had the blank screen lockup, and fixes for escort mission failures, Red Flag Buildings, PC Speaker sounds, ROE conflicts, B-52 crashing, ships in allied comm mode in Kurile Theatre, and others.

Microprose

Script File which allows **Silent Service II** (Amiga) to be copied onto a Hard Drive.

A new **Civilization** sound driver for OPL3 boards:

This new driver is only for owners of OPL3/YM262-based sound cards (Pro Audio Spectrum Plus/16 and new Sound Blaster Pros). Owners of these boards have only been hearing one channel of sound due to hardware incompatibilities with the

first stereo AdLib type boards. The music and F/X will now be in mono, but all parts will be heard.

New .SIM Missions from **Gunship 2000** designer Jim Day. These missions can be accessed through the Mission Builder. A new file for **UMS II Planet Editor** upgrades to EGA version to 1.6.6.

Upgrade of **Rex Nebular** which updates all prior versions to the latest version .848.

Bethesda Softworks

A new Install.Exe fixes any corrupted Install program on the 3.5' disks of **Wayne Gretzky hockey 3** and **Terminator 2049.**

New World Computing

Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen update corrects the 'Save As' problem. This update also requires 64K less of extended/expanded memory for those of you that are having problems running on 2 meg machines.

Because of some BIOS configurations 2 meg machines vary in the amount of free memory available for programs to run in

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all of the above upgrades are available free to registered users and may also be obtained from commercial bulletin boards such as CompuServe and GENie.

Sega vs Accolade: Round 3

Immediately following the written judgement of The Ninth District Court of Appeals which outlined their reasons for finding for Accolade in their legal battle with the console giant, Sega announced that they would appeal.

The case was brought by Sega over what they felt was breach of copyright by Accolade when the software house produced their own games for the Sega Genesis, bypassing the licensing agreement and the accompanying technology that allowed 'legal' entry into the machine's innards. The eventual judgement should prove precedent setting for the process known as 'reverse engineering'. Commenting on the trademark issue, Sega's so-called Trademark Security System (TMSS), the court held that:

> 'Sega (in employing TMSS, knowingly risked two significant consequences; the false labelling of some competitors products and the discouraging of other competitors from manufacturing Genesis compatible games. Under the Lanham act, the former conduct, at least, is clearly unlawful.
>
> 'Trademark policies are designed (1) to protect consumers from being misled; 2) to prevent an impairment of the value of the enterprise which owns the trademark; and 3) to achieve these ends in a manner consistent with the objectives of free competition. Sega violated the first and third of these principles.
>
> 'With respect to Accolade, we emphasize that the record clearly establishes that it had only one objective in this matter: to make its games compatible with the Genesis III console. That objective was a legitimate and lawful one.
>
> 'The case presents several difficult questions of first impressions involving our copyright and trademark laws... To oversimplify, the record establishes that Accolade, a commercial competition of Sega, engaged in wholesale copying of Sega's copyrighted code a preliminary step in the development of a competing product. However, the key to the case is that we are dealing with computer software, a relatively unexplored area in the world of copyright law...Our conclusion does not, of course, insulate Accolade from a claim of copyright infringement with respect to its finished products. Sega has reserved the right to raise such a claim, and it may do so on remand'.

Riley Russell, corporate counsel for Sega of America, say that Sega's appeal will be based on the fact that 'the evidence will conclusively prove that our copyrights have been infringed'. He added 'In our opinion, the court improperly applied the doctrine of fair use and disregarded established precedents in this area of law. We feel the court's ruling, if it stands, substantially reduces the ability of manufacturers to protect their intellectually property. If this ruling stands, it will have a negative affect on America's competitive advantage in the computer industry'.

Edward J Black, of the General Counsel of the Computer and Communications Industry Association strongly disagreed this view, adding that: 'The court's ruling will guarantee a bright future for innovative and independent software vendors and smaller hardware companies who need to ensure that independently developed software is interoperable with the products of larger companies that control many of the de facto hardware and software standards in our industry'.

Air Bucks moves up a class

Impressions have released the promised 1.01 version of their business strategy game **Air Bucks** and expect to have the 1.02 version ready in the first quarter. The 1.01 version fixes minor bugs as well as adding a toolbar containing key commands and an 'easy' setting for beginners. The interface has also been refined to make commands faster and easier to reach while a 16 page strategy guide is also included. The precise details of 1.02 are unknown at present, though a VGA upgrade is on the cards as is a 'zoom' mode which will allow players to espy their planes heading hopefully towards their destination.

Sim City Competition

What will the city of the future look like? Will it prevent traffic gridlock and overcrowding? Can it achieve both environmental protection and economic growth? It is these questions which will be addressed by 7th and 8th grade students from five cities in the US who will have the chance to design their own energy-efficient environmentally balanced city in a national competition using Maxis' **Sim City** program. Regional contests will take place in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and Washington DC. One finalist from each city will advance to Washington during National Engineers Week in February '93 where they will compete for computers and fab cash prizes. Anyone wishing to enter should call Carol Rieg on 202 785 0017, or fax 202 785 0835, for an entry form.

The contest is only open to students in the 7th and 8th grades who attend public and private schools in the aforementioned cities. Please indicate whether the school attended has a PC or a Mac.

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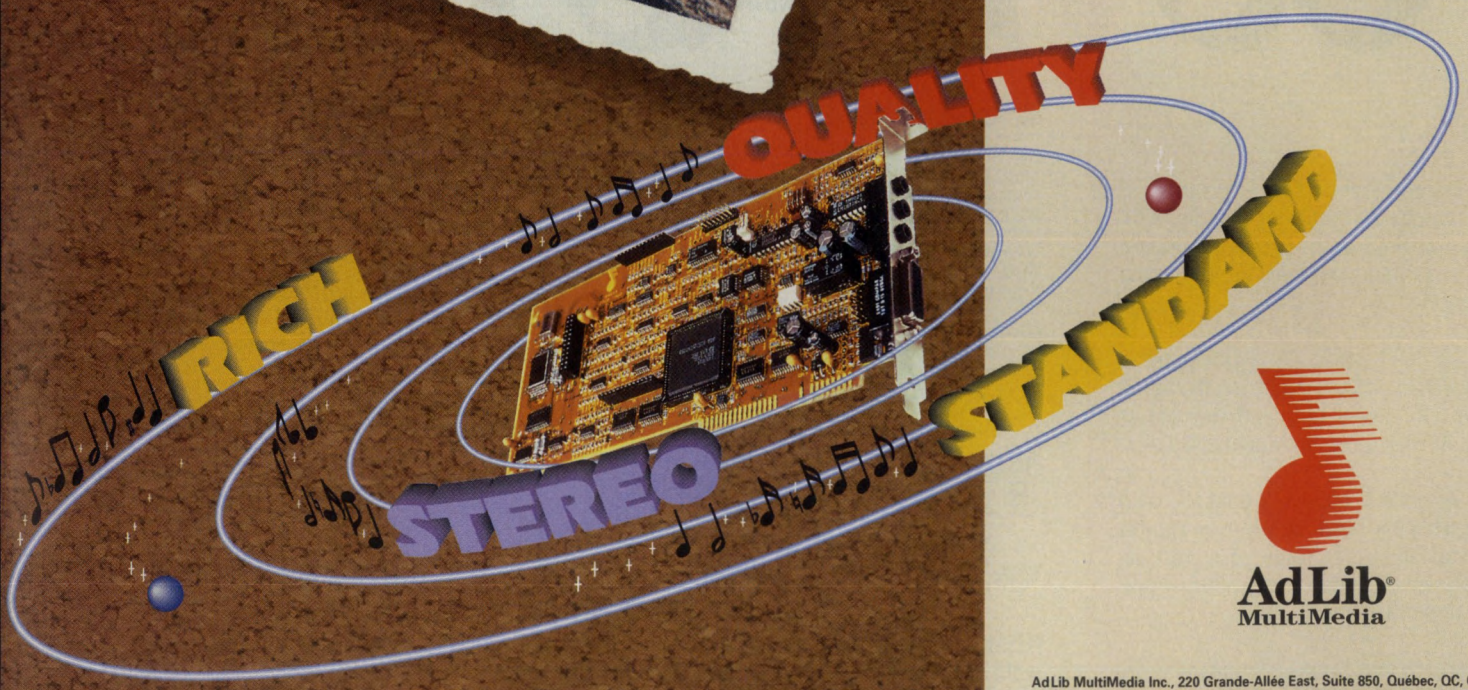

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More Than Two Can Play

Brian Walker investigates the Multi Player Games Network

It's no great revelation to say that the chief obstacle to multi player gaming is finding opponents. Modems have alleviated the problem to some extent but even here it is virtually impossible to find games that accomodate more than two players. So what's the solution? According to a company in the unlikely sounding town of Pouhquag, New York, the answer is The Multi Player Games Network (MPG Net), a new on-line service dedicated to multi player gaming.

On the face it this may not sound much of a fix to non New Yorkers who would incur long distance charges every time they log on. But MPG NET has the answer: rather than having to go through an expensive 'link' service such as Sprint or MCI, users will able to log on using the ubiquitous Compuserve nodes for a surcharge of $3 an hour. Another cheap log on alternative is to go thorugh PSI-Net for a flat rate of $39 a month plus a one time registration fee for the same amount.

The service is not limited to an American audience, which will no doubt come as a relief to our many readers around the world. International users can can connect to MPG NET through any Internet site. MPG's Internet address is: mpgn.com, or login.mpgn.com. Once through to MPG NET, the cost of actually playing the game varies between $2.15 and $3.00 an hour depending on which payment plan is choosen.

The games selected offer a rich variety, from the fantasy world of **The Kingdom of Drakkar** to the classic wargame, **Operation Market Garden**. There's also the railroad game **Empire Builder** which is based

GO

The Board game of **GO** is savored by over twenty-five million players, who treat it as both an enjoyable recreation and a serious exercise in logic and philosphy.

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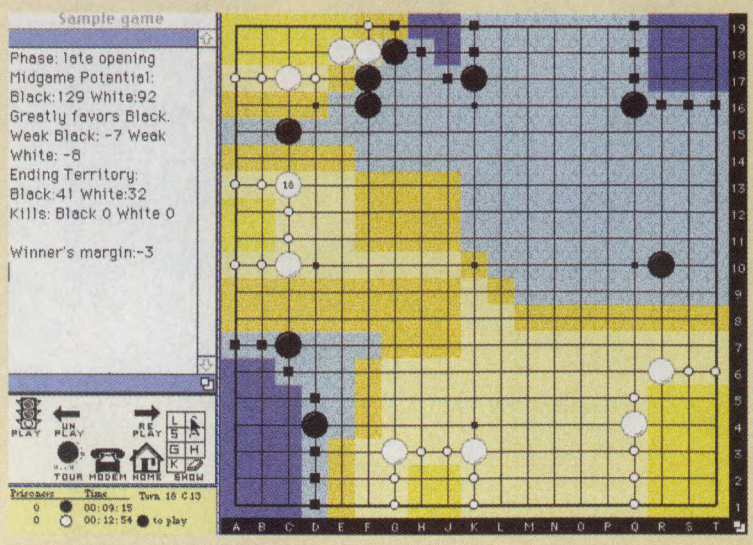

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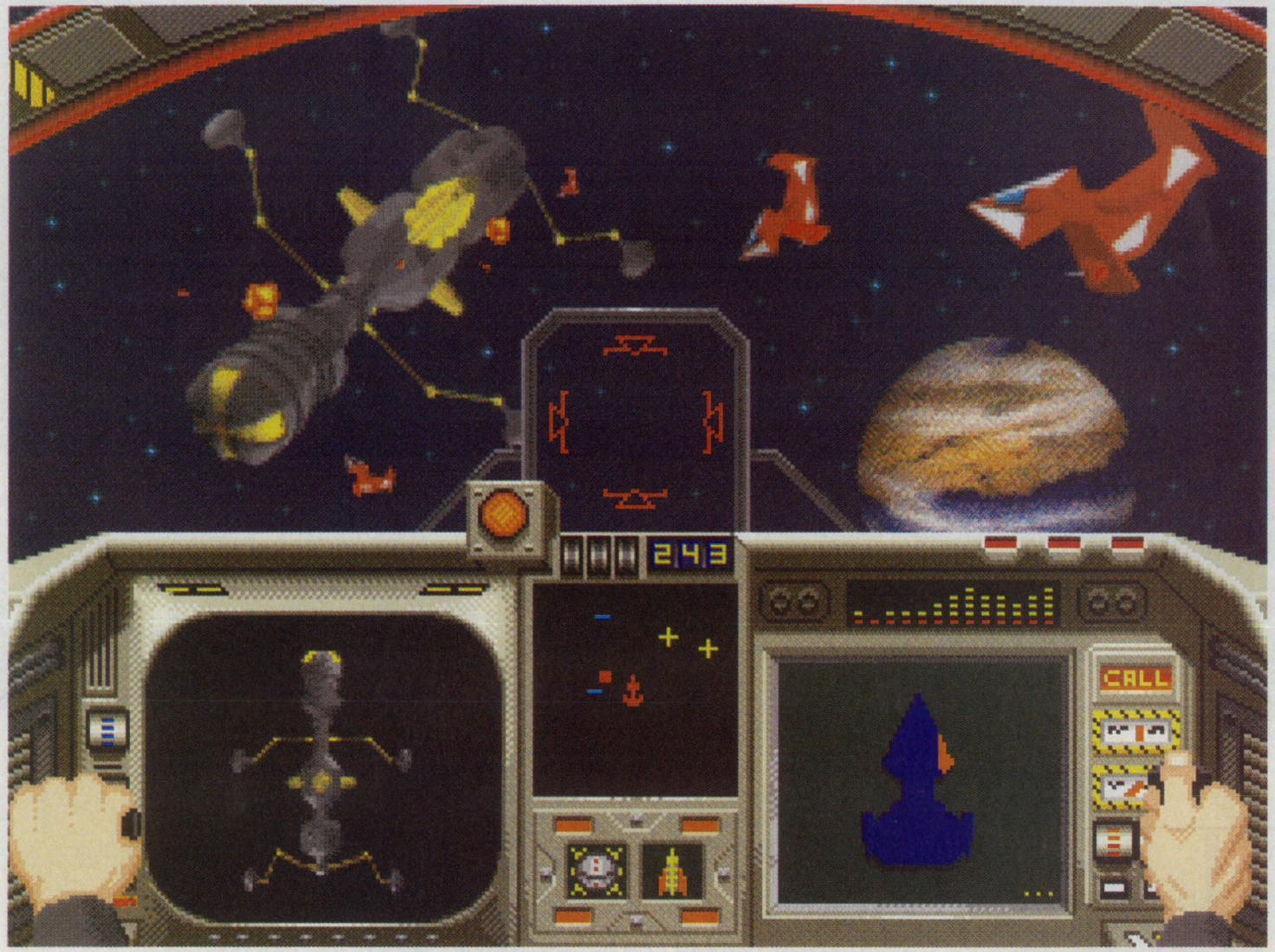


Star Cruiser: Could give Wing Commander a run for its money

on the boardgame of the same title from Mayfair Games. Each turn, up to six players spend up to $20m building track to cities where there is either a supply or demand for commodities. Revenue to build more track is generated by delivering goods. The winner is the first player to acquire $250m.

Operation Market Garden is based on the board wargame from GDW which was one of the first games to use 'double blinds' to simulate hidden movement. The game focuses on one of the more famous paradrops of WWII as allied paratroopers attempt seize Dutch bridges. And just to stop rookies getting hosed by smart Alecs, **Operation Market Garden** will have a ranking system. MPG NET also have a new wargame called **Fog of War**. This is a squad level game with over 20 scenarios taking place in an abstracted world.

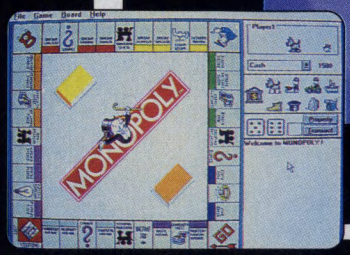
Another GDW conversion is **Star Cruiser**, a multi player space combat game whose 3D animated graphics look as though they could give **Wing Commander** a run for its money. If its futuristic role playing that's being sought then MPG NET offer **2300 AD** and **Dark Conspiracy**, while **Mekton 11** should appeal to **Battletech** fans.

Traditional role playing can be found in **The Kingdom of Drakkar** which can handle up to 100 participants. Starting off as a simple merchant, the first decision facing players is to choose one of six professions: fighter, martial artist, mentalist, healer, thief, barbarian. Skills and abilities are developed as the game progresses. The storyline opts for an open-ended rather than a linear approach. Adventurers team up in a special 'meeting hall' which is decked out like an English pub. Characters are saved and stored when players exit, but the game will evolve in their absence **Drakkar**, which uses a special program known as Drakvision developed for the game by MPG NET, will be reviewed in full next month. All of the aforementioned games sport 256 color animated graphics, contain sound support, and are available for use with IBM PC, Apple Mac and Amiga computers.

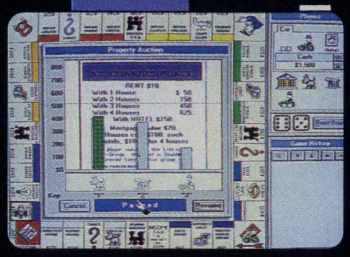
***Star Cruiser**, **The Kingdom of Drakkar**, **Empire Builder**, and **Operation Market Garden** are all expected to go 'live' on MPG NET on Dec 1.*

Trade Up!

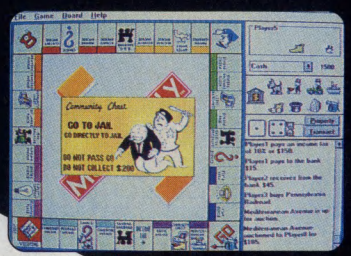
The Game You Grew Up With Has Grown Up Too!



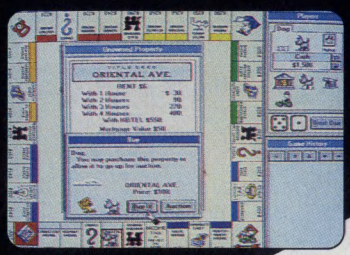
WINDOWS ™ version



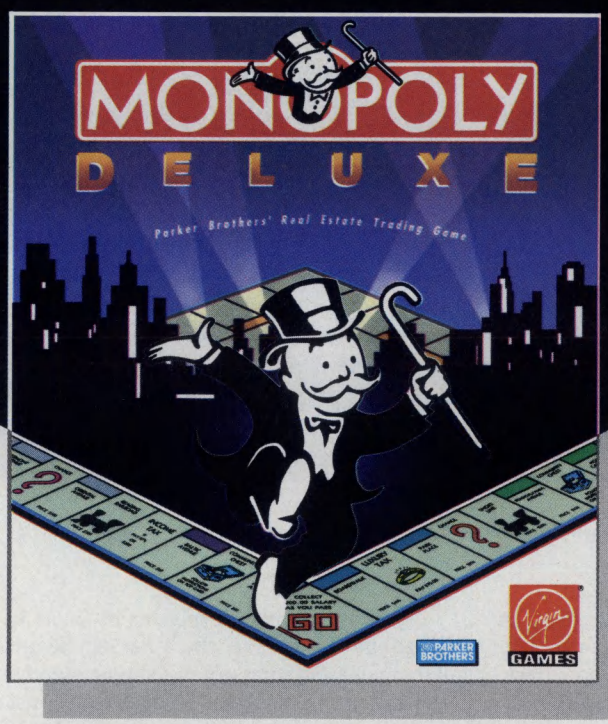
IBM PC version



WINDOWS ™ version



IBM PC version



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Velikiye Luki!

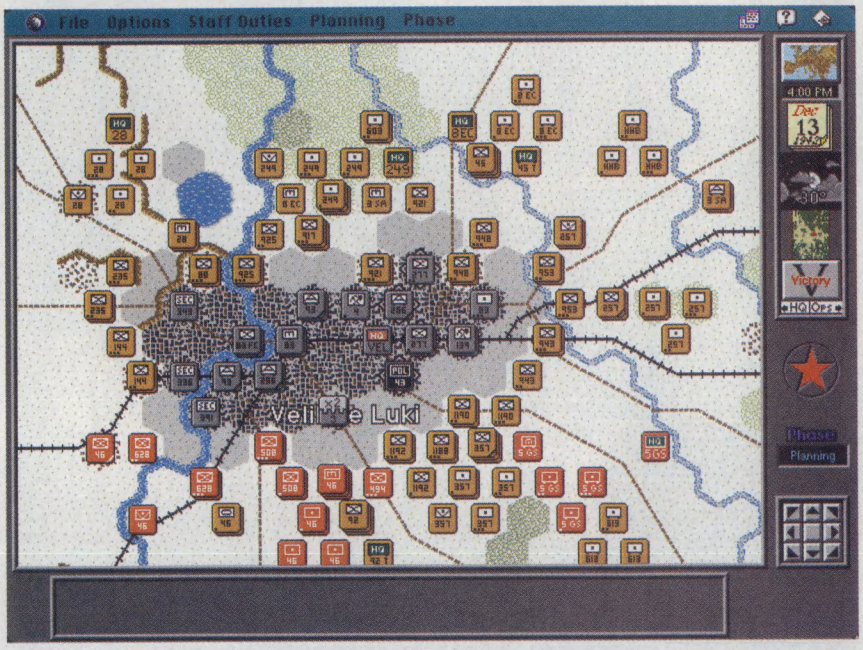
Brian Walker looks at the latest scenario for Three Sixty Pacific's V For Victory

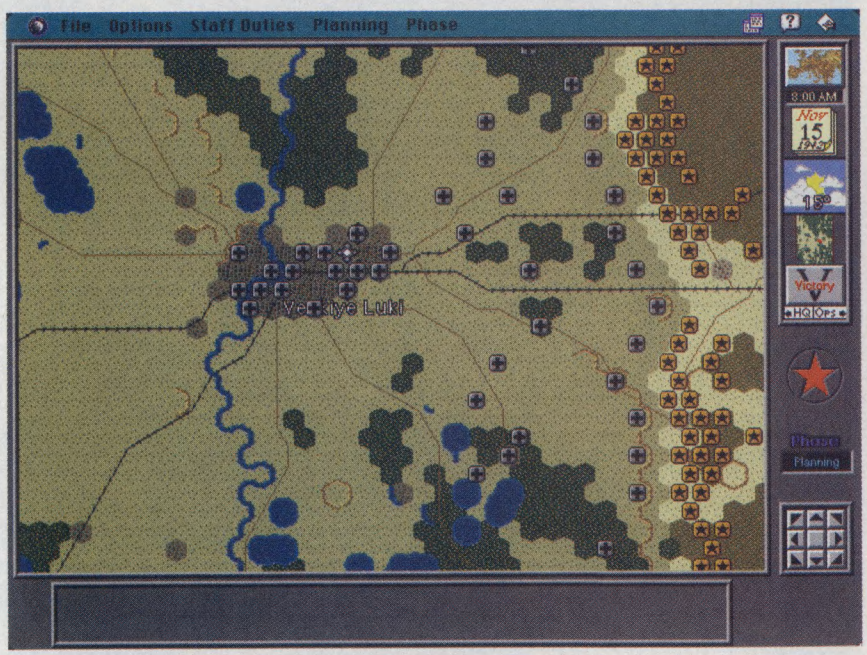
V for Victory - Game 2, **Velikiye Luki**, takes the series East, to the Russian Front of WWII. As the German commander, players must rescue their encircled forces which are holding out at the ancient fortress town of Velikiye Luki, while protecting the Vitebsk-Leningrad railroad, vital to the supply of German Army Group North. Or, as the Russian commander, take Velikiye Luki and advance to the railroad, in order to cut off and destroy the fascist invaders. In addition to an improved computer opponent and an enhanced user interface, this new scenario includes the following features

- An expanded weather model to include temperatures and handle snow, ice, and mud. The terrain graphics change as the weather changes!
- A new attack mode: attack-no-advance, for those times when this is desirable.
- A new 'ride' feature that allows infantry to ride tanks.
- Three additional artillery modes: Shoot 'n Scoot - units in this mode automatically move after they have conducted their fire mission. On-Call Defensive Fire. This is useful because which units will receive support fire does not have to be specified. If an artillery unit is put into On-Call mode, it will be available where it's needed. (Not available to Russians). Counter-Battery Fire - units in this mode will automatically fire at enemy artillery units that fire during the Execution phase. Units in Scoot mode will usually be able to escape before counter-battery fire comes in. (Not available to Russians)
- Commandos: when playing with limited info, these units begin 'cloaked'. While cloaked, they are invisible to the enemy, immune to supply restrictions and supply lines, and ignore enemy zones of control (ZOC). Also, they attack with a *big* bonus and reduce enemy ZOC in and around their position.
- Ownership: if the limited intelligence option is switched off, there will be no noticeable difference. Otherwise, the computer now keeps track of the real ownership of a hex, as well as what each side *thinks* the ownership is.

The program will include seven scenarios of varying difficulty, including an introductory scenario as well as the campaign game. The campaign game can be modified through the use of 13 historical variants, including German air superiority and additional units.

Lead programmer Keith Zabalouai told me that the team at Three Sixty were most encouraged by the response to the release of **V For Victory**. 'There's been a lot of talk about how the computer should radically alter the nature of wargames and that's fine, but there's an awful lot of players out there who want nothing more than computerised versions of the board wargames which gave them so much pleasure. 'That's what we aim to give them with this series,' said Keith.





The third program in this series will be **Operation Market Garden** which will be released in Spring '93. **Market Garden** will feature the first appearance of the British (hooray!). Modem play is currently slated as a new feature, though it should be stressed that its inclusion is still uncertain.❑

***Velikiye Luki** will be released for the Mac and PC in December. Ownership of the original **V for Victory** is necessary to play this game*

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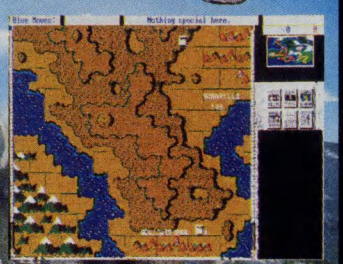

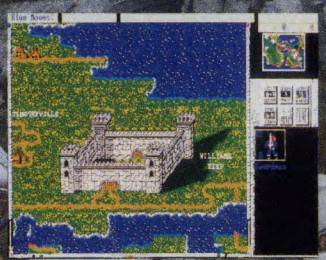

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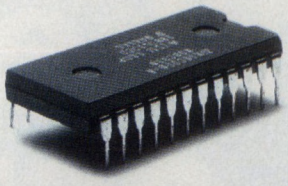

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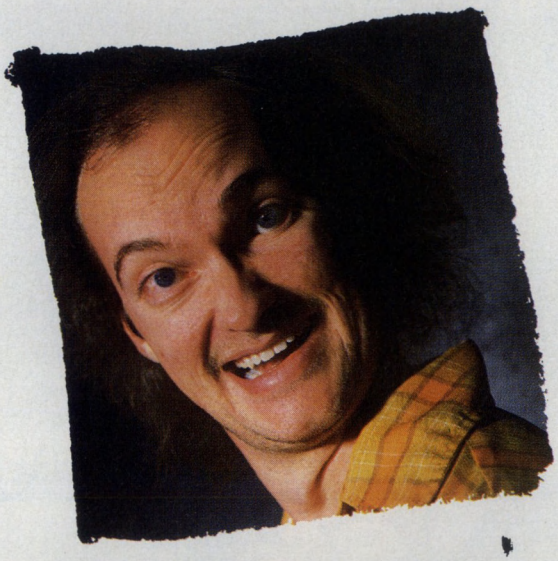

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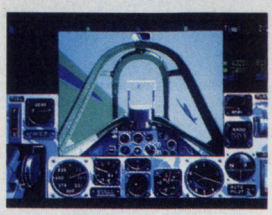

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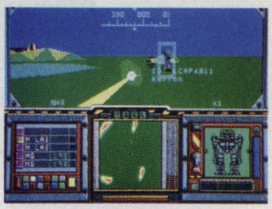

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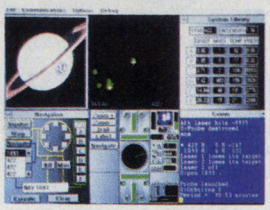

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Conquered Kingdoms

Take that you troll

By Brian Walker

The hitherto unknown land of Cascatia should soon gain recognition once **Conquered Kingdoms** hits the shelves, as this is the territory in which QQP's medieval strategy game is set. Anyone who has played QQP's **The Lost Admiral** will be instantly at home with this new offering for the interface and the combat system are almost identical. Instead of naval units capturing occupying bases, we now have fantasy creatures attempting to take castles. Altogether there are 15 different unit types, ranging from stodgy old swordsmen to exotic phantoms.

Straight as an arrow

Play commences in this turn based game with either an individual scenario or the campaign being chosen. In total there 9 'battlemaps' plus a random map for the campaign game. Units are bought from a points pool. The key to success is understanding the relationships between units.

For example, archers are great against dragons and are one of the few units to have ranged fire, however, they are weak on defence and prone to being trampled to bits by cavalry. The fantasy creatures include Gargoyles which kill archers outright; trolls who have a sort of zombie regeneration facility; phantoms will strike fear into enemy units and thus affect their defence and wizards which have a tremendous variety of options at their disposal owing to their use of mana (the more they use, the more they can do).

The objective in the game is to acquire points by conquering designated territories, however the value of these territories fall a distant second to the castles when it comes to point scoring: 300 points for the first castle, 600 for the second, 900 for the third, and so on. No castles, no win.

Aside from such conquests, there are various resources dotted up and down the land to consider. Gold, coal, and wood combine to enable new units to be produced (don't ask how!) in the castles. There are acquired by stationing a unit on such a resource for until the resource become permanent. The combat in and around the castles forms a major part of the game so it's only appropriate that these buildings have an elaborate structure. The main areas are the gates and the keep. Only certain units can go through the gates of an occupied castle while the keep offers good defensive facilities but can be bombarded by units with ranged fire. Six hits and it's history.

The combat system is simplistic, too simplistic for my taste. The main problem being that fire is not modified by terrain or distance. The castle offers a defensive advantage to the occupiers but that's all. Additionally, when a unit is damaged its only chance of repair is to be within the healing range of the King.

Climbing the ladders

The computer opponent on level one is a walkover and as such is an excellent place to begin. Count on tough games further up the ladder. In fact said ladder contains 21 rungs. At first sight I would say that this affects the number of points in the computers starting pool rather than any spectacular play on its part.

Where the game will really come into its own I feel, is with modem play. Turns are consecutive rather than simultaneous, though there should not be too much 'down time'.

The most obvious comparison for a game of this kind is SSG's **Warlords**. Overall I preferred the gameplay in **Conquered Kingdom**, mainly because there is more of everything. More units, more maps, and more scenarios. However, I felt the graphics in **Warlords** were superior. The units in **Conquered Kingdoms** are nicely drawn but the maps have a crude feel to them, while the artwork in the intermediate screens is amateurish.

Solid as a rock

I also preferred the combat system in the SSG game. My reservations regarding the latter in **Conquered Kingdoms** should not deter anyone looking for a good fantasy strategy game. The gameplay is solid, the interface is excellent, and replay value is guaranteed thanks in part to the excellent score history that QQP have provided. As to the modem option . . . the flourish on a gargoyles fin, methinks. ❑

Designed by
Thurston Searfoss

Published by
QQP

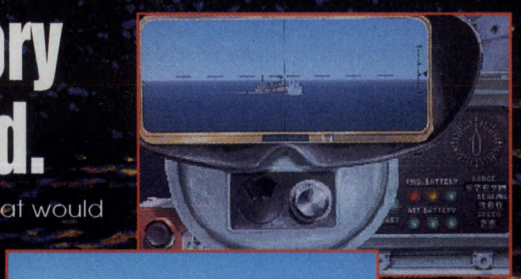
Systems
PC

Graphics
VGA EGA

Supports
Mouse, Keyboard, Modem play

Players
1-2

A legendary year in the history of naval conflict has returned.



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Dune II

The Building of a Dynasty

By John Harrington

Ah, *Dune*. Possibly the most hideously over-rated Science Fiction book I have read but one which, I grant, has enough breadth to provide fertile source material for a series of computer games. This, the second in the series, is a solo player tactical level wargame with resource management considerations. The aim is to steer one of the Empire's three leading factions to total supremacy on the planet Arrakis (aka Dune).

Spice of strife

For those mercifully unfamiliar with Frank Herbert's turgid space opera, the significance of the desert planet Dune is that it is the universe's only source of 'melange' - a spice with life-extending and mind-expanding properties. Spice is an essential aid for navigators attempting interstellar travel. If it makes it any easier to understand, think of Dune as Kuwait, spice as oil, and the three factions as Iraq, the United Nations and the pre-Gorbachev Soviet Union.

In an attempt to reduce his budget deficit, the Emperor (George Bush?) has agreed to cede ownership of the planet Dune to whichever faction can deliver the most spice. The player, therefore, has two objectives: to build a spice harvesting operation on the planet and to prevent the other factions doing the same. The former is achieved by building power stations, spice refineries and storage silos, searching for and harvesting spice deposits, whilst the latter is achieved by building up the military and kicking some butt. It is a classic wargame dilemma between economic growth and military expansion.

The campaign consists of a series of increasingly demanding scenarios, each of which introduces the player to new military and manufacturing unit types. This programmed learning method, plus the smooth user interface, makes the game easy to learn, even for beginners. This is just as well, for the game eschews a turn-based system in favour of constant real-time action which tests the player's ability to multi-task.

In many ways it is a miniatures wargaming system with a **Millenium 2.2** style resource management element grafted on. For example, the player might send some of his troops on a scouting mission, then turn his attention to the construction of a radar post.

Whilst concentrating on the radar post the player's troops may well be ambushed by the enemy or, worse still, eaten by one of the giant sand worms which inhabit the planet. In the event of an ambush a warning is flashed on the screen, although annoyingly no indication is given as to where the ambush is taking place. When a worm pops up for lunch they don't even leave a thank-you note.

Sand Pizza

The key to the game is in assigning military units to their most suitable roles. Foot soldiers, lacking both speed and ranged weapons, are best suited to defending the home base or escorting the harvesting machines. My favourite unit is the humble spice harvester which ostensibly has no combat value at all, but which can turn foot soldiers into sand pizza if they fall under its tracks.

The computer plays a reasonable game in defence but makes scant use of what little concealing terrain there is when launching attacks. It also seems susceptible to fast units luring outriders into ambushes in the manner beloved of Koei's **Genghis Khan**, but otherwise is most capable of dealing with headless chicken commanders.

It is recommended that the game be saved regularly otherwise all games have to restarted from the first scenario. The early scenarios should be played in accelerated-time mode, especially if all enemy units have been eliminated. Once this has been achieved it is simply a matter of grinding out the spice quota; a super-turbo mode would have been most welcome to expedite this tedious phase of the game.

I suspect in the final scenario, after the three factions have beaten seven barrels of faeces out of each other, the Emperor will attempt a double-cross and send his own troops in to seize control. By then the player should have devised some workable tactics to deal with the Emperor's crack troops.

Dune II: The Building of a Dynasty is a solid game with an elegant interface garnished with state of the art chrome in the form of atmospheric sampled speech (which is also useful in alerting the player to off-screen events) and excellent graphics. It fails to achieve blockbuster status because too many scenarios end with a grind rather than a bang, but it will be spending a few more weeks on my hard disk. ❑

Designed by
Aaron Powell & Joe Bostic

Published by
Virgin Games

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
VGA, MCGA

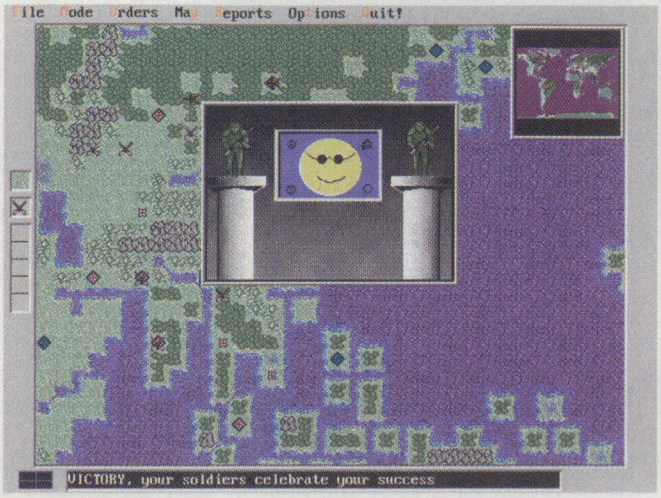
Sound
Roland MT–32/LAPC–1, Ad Lib, Sound Blaster

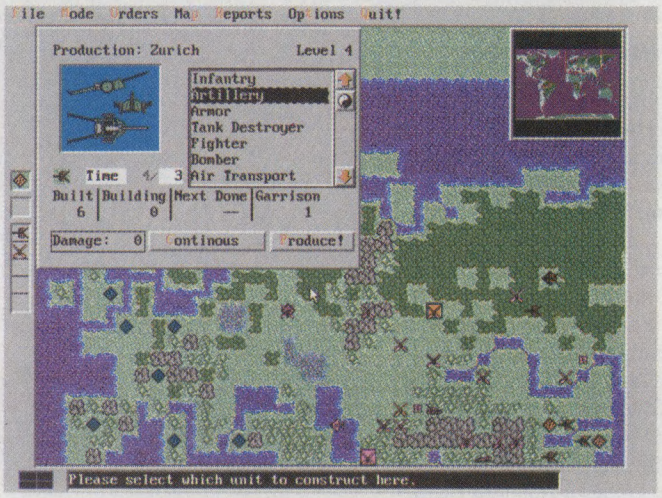
Supports
Mouse, Keyboard

Battles of Destiny

Worlds in chaos

By Brian Walker





Designed by
Several Dudes Holistic Software

Published by
QQP

Systems
PC

Graphics
EGA, VGA

Sound
AdLib

Supports
Mouse, Keyboard, file transfers by modem

Players
1-4

It looks like **Empire**, it feels like **Empire**, and it plays like **Empire**, but gosh by golly it isn't **Empire**. It's **Battles of Destiny**, the latest abstract wargame from QQP. Despite being produced by an outside development team, **Battles of Destiny** contains many elements that distinguish it as a QQP game such as extensive score histories, a campaign game, and an excellent interface.

Production

The game takes play in a largely abstract world, though one (of the many) maps features Earth as we know it. Each city represents a production centre capable of producing units, which is just as well as players only have one unit per city at the commencement of play. There is a vast array of unit types at one's disposal, twenty in total comprising land, sea, and air. Production of these is turn based, the cost being time rather than monetary - the more sophisticated the weaponry the longer the production thereof. Certain production centres have better facilities and can thus produce quicker. Production levels may be raised by specifying this instead of producing a unit. Production levels also may be reduced by enemy bombing.

What to produce presents an interesting dilemma; air and sea transports can take some time, the temptation then is to go for infantry and armor which can be churned out quickly but which cannot negotiate water. And water is a ubiquitous element on most maps.

Aggression

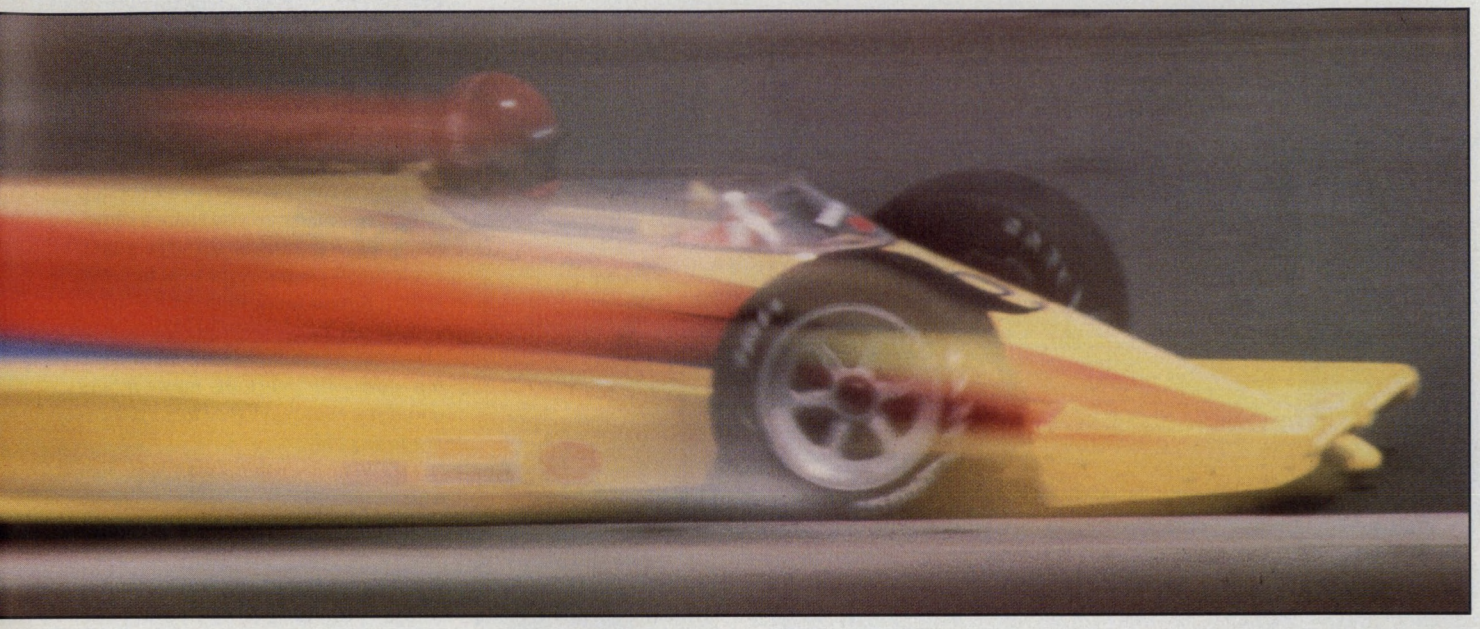
Combat is enforced by a rigid but effective system. Infantry knock out tank killers who in turn take out armor, and so on. Because of the vast number of units in the game this system can take some time to master, careful study is a must if victory is to be achieved. The victory conditions themselves can be varied according to player preference; either a time or points limit (the latter being acquired through posession of cities).

The computer plays extremely aggressively and for this reason I would recommend setting the difficulty to something like 30% until familiarity with the game is acquired. Despite being turn based, play has a hectic feel to it. Perhaps this is because of the amount of management required - the maps are huge and when the game is in full swing trying to keep tabs on everything can be a dizzying experience. The file trasnsfer by modem option is most welcome as the introduction of a human element should provide atmosphere which is the one thing, if anything, the game lacks.

Compulsion

The strategic challange in the game is unquestionable, a pity then that the graphics do not alleviate its somewhat alienating abstract nature. The maps are fine but the units bear little relation to their real-life counterparts. The tank killers, for example, resemble slugs while cities are denoted by anonymous looking colored shapes. Animated graphics pop up occasionally to offer light relief but sound is limited to a few tinkles and plonks. Because of this **Battles of Destiny** is not immediately appealing but this should not deter those interested in its basic premise. It is a fine game, and one that warrants repeated play as well as offering a serious cerebral challenge. Perserverance will be rewarded. ❑

If it were any faster, it'd be a flight simulator.



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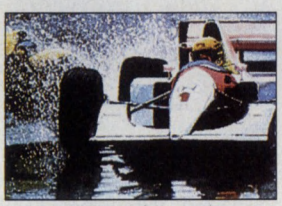
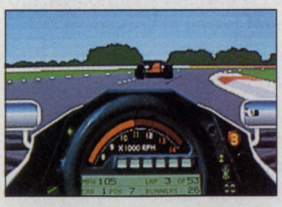
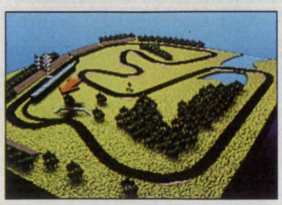
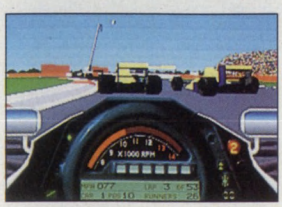


Actual screens may vary.







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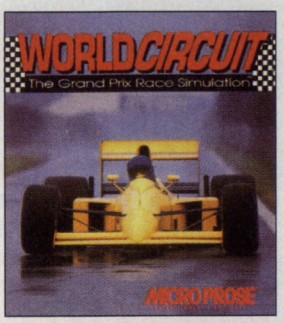

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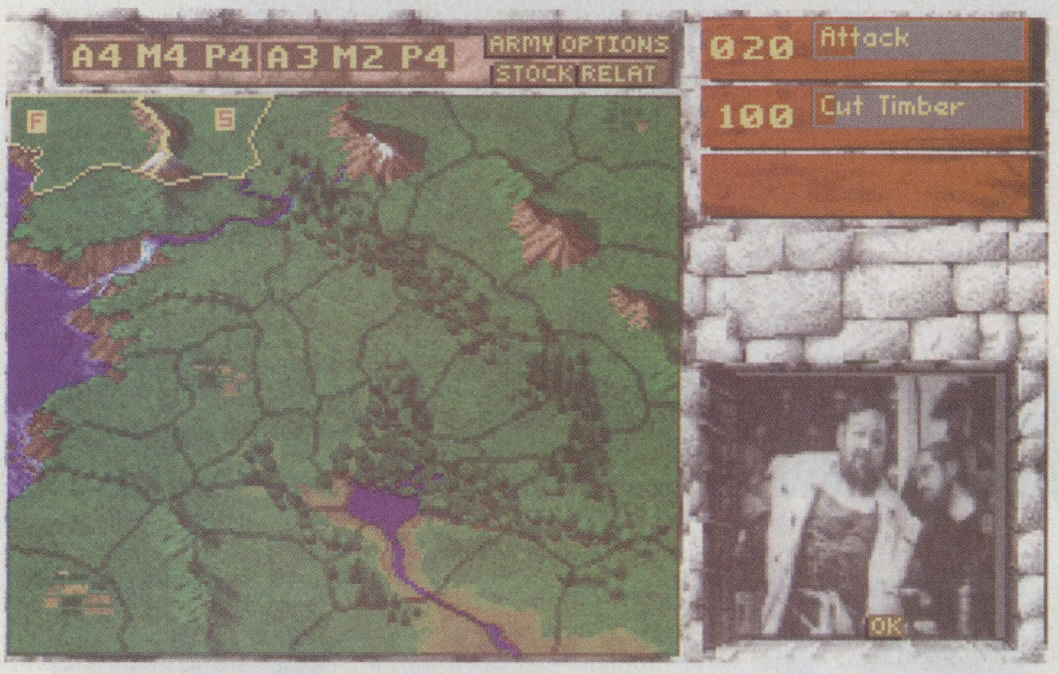
Castles 2

Siege and Conquest

By Brian Walker



Designed by
Vince DeNardo
William C Fisher
Byon Garrabant

Published by
Interplay

Graphics
256 color VGA, EGA

Sound
Music though most soundboards

Supports
mouse

Notes
Screen shots displayed here differ slightly from those in the finished game

Before commencing the review proper of this sequel, it's tempting to rave on about what a disappointment **Castles** was. Too tempting. **Castles** was one of those games which couldn't possibly live up to its own concept. Indeed, the marketing strategy was so brilliant that the release of the game seemed almost irrelevant. Inevitable, therefore, that when **Castles** *was* released it was a huge disappointment to many, and one that probably induced more 'but if only's' than any game in software history.

King maker

And so now comes **Castles 2**. What would Interplay do? Fulfil all the hopes and dreams we had for the original game, or merely give us more of the same? The answer is: neither. **Castles 2** is a radical reworking that bears little resemblance to the original. Gone is the laborious castle building, it still exists but is now automated. Taking its place is a strategy game with diplomatic and political overtones.

The objective in the game is to be crowned King of the realm circa 1320 somewhere in Europe. Achieving this requires a combination of administrative and diplomatic skills. 'Tasks' are the heart of the game system; political, military, and administrative to be precise. A certain number of points are available in each of these categories (3 at the commencement of play). These points are allocated towards chosen functions, the more points allocated the quicker the task gets completed. Scouting, gathering (produce), and policing the realm, are some of the tasks on offer.

Sin city

In the early stages, gathering is essential if the populace is to fed. Scouting is also important to see who owns adjacent territories. If these are 'neutral' then an invasion is recommended. At the outset of the game, there is an option to turn tactical battles on or off. If the former is selected then a tactical map pops up immediately prior to an invasion. Player input in this is pretty much limited to positioning troops and deciding to retreat if things don't quite go as planned.

All this activity does not go unnoticed by the pope (these are catholic times). He, or one of his emissaries, frequently turns up on one's doorstep with his 'sinner can you spare a dime' spiel. Paying him is a mugs game. Bartering is probably the best step, but killing him is more fun.

'Your sins have not gone unnoticed, but god will overlook these if you could see your way clear to contributing four gold'
'Certainly, your holiness. Step this way'
'Aaargh!

Of course, offing the pope causes outrage in the general vicinity and will also lead to a drop in the happiness level in one's own (catholic) domain. The happiness level is a key factor in the game and must be kept at a reasonable level. Being defeated in war does not make people happy neither does having no food. Policing the realm, while essential to fend off saboteurs, is also guaranteed to plunge the populace into deep depression.

Castle building, as previously stated, is now automated once the design has been decided. This is considered a 'task' and thus the time it takes to complete is dependent on the points allocated. In general, it's a good tactic to get one up sharpish, especially if the plebs are feeling a bit gloomy. Apart from doubling the produce rate, castles also deter revolts and offer a good defense against invasions.

Body pointers

The manual does a good job of explaining what's occurring and also contains a useful tutorial to get players started. There is little information, however, on the combat system. I suspect that this is because it is so simplified, its lack of importance acknowledged by being able to turn the tactical combat screen off.

It should be clear by now that **Castles 2** is most definitely not a combat oriented game in the manner of **Warlords** and **Conquered Kingdoms**. Oddly, it most resembles one of the historical simulations from Koei. Substitute their 'body point's system for the 'tasks', and the games take on a remarkable similarity. The main difference is the reduced emphasis on combat and the graphics. While Koei labor on in EGA, Interplay raise the ante by producing beautifully drawn map graphics and excellent artwork throughout the game. It should also be noted that **Castles 2** (unlike the Koei games) is a real time game, though there is none of the rushed feeling that one often associates with this mode.

The gameplay itself is very subjective. **Castles 2** is a lot more fun to play than it is to think about (and especially to write about). Certainly it is a vast improvement on the original game. The interface has been completely revamped and there is now a linear goal. However, it's difficult to give it an unequivocal recommendation.

As is perhaps inevitable with a game which places so much emphasis on number crunching, there was too much happening in the background for my liking.

I found the constant messages from my neighbours repetitive and tedious. These can't be switched off because they are an integral part of the game system and not just decorative (how one responds affects political relationships). Perhaps to alleviate this, an old black and white movie runs in the lower right of the screen if loaded, but be warned: it takes up an extra 6 megabytes of hard disk space.

All of this is not to write off **Castles 2**. It has a lot of atmosphere, excellent graphics, and a solid game system. But if only . . .❑

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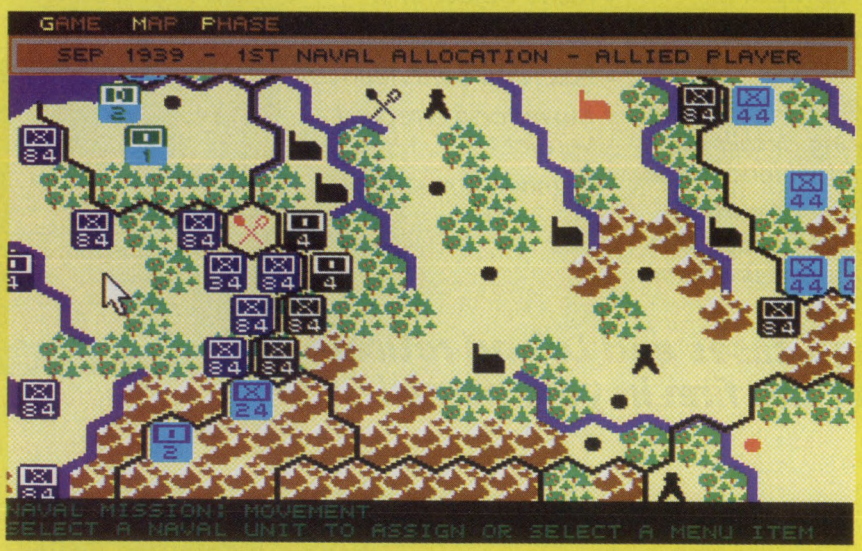
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SEP 1939 - 1ST NAVAL ALLOCATION - ALLIED PLAYER
NAVAL MISSION: MOVEMENT
SELECT A NAVAL UNIT TO ASSIGN OR SELECT A MENU ITEM

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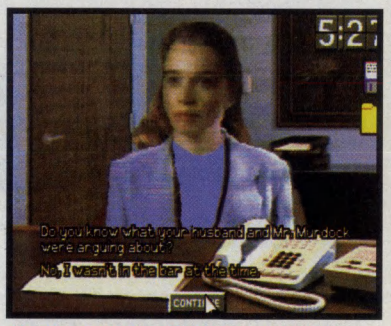

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5:56
Case File - Police Report
Witness called emergency dispatch to report blue Pontiac Firebird off road on Mulholland just west of Encino Hills Drive. Police and fire units dispatched 2149h. Driver was only occupant. Transported. Reported DOA Northridge Hospital at 2215.
Driver IDed as Edward Bennett of 4512 Hazeltine Ave., Panorama City. Witness reported seeing a red Ford Mustang in high speed race with subject vehicle. Second vehicle did not remain at scene of incident.
Examination of subject vehicle revealed damage to passenger side not consistent with other damage caused by vehicle leaving road. Also found in the passenger side damage area were red colored smudges identified by the police lab as automobile paint.
Subsequent investigation identified suspect vehicle as registered to Timothy Murdock of 5437 Norwitch, Apt. 201, Sherman Oaks.
Murdock, Timothy
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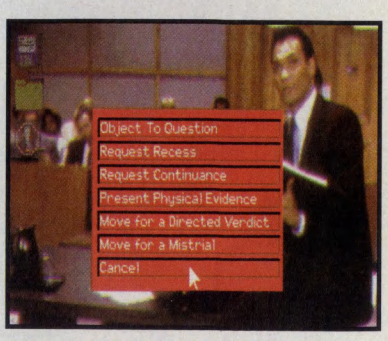

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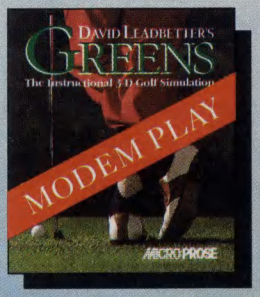

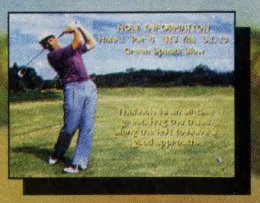

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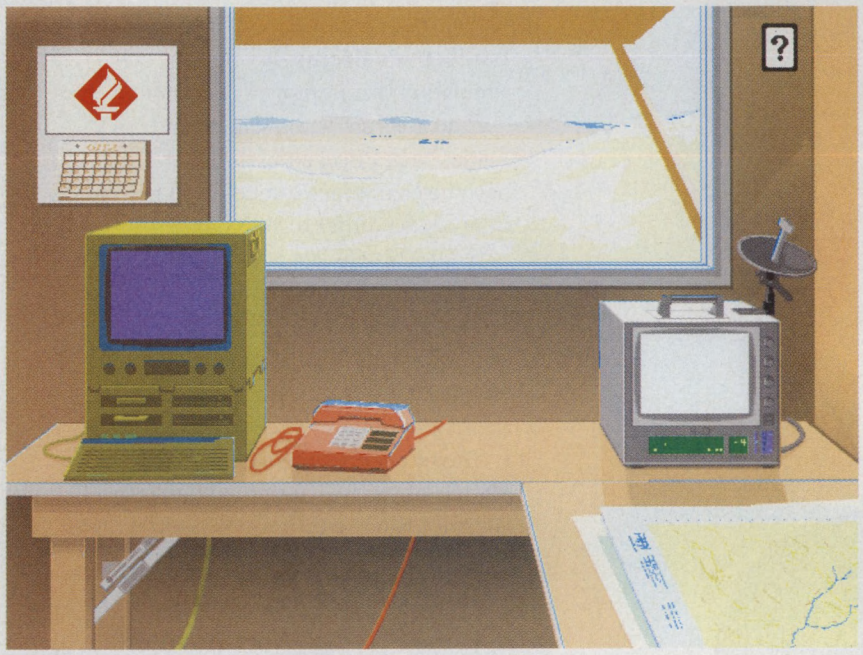
Storm in A Teacup?



Desert Storm: mirage or the killer application?

Sandy Eisen asks whether Desert Storm is the killer application that CD ROM has been waiting for

Designed by
4D Interactive Systems Inc

Published by
Quanta Press/ Compton's New Media

Systems
PC CD-ROM drive with MS extensions

Supports
Most sound cards

For about the last 18 months we have all been bombarded with the hyped message that it is the 'Year of CD-ROM'. The technology, which has been around about as long as **Dungeon Master**, has become cheaper and more common. Commodore has launched CDTV, Phillips is marketing CD-I, and the Multimedia PC with soundboard and CD-ROM drive is available from a host of manufacturers

The problem for all of the above is that nobody anywhere has come up with the 'killer application.' So far CD drives are the preserve of enthusiasts and hackers, because there is simply no 'must-have' program available only to CD-ROM drive owners. Until now. Perhaps. When **Desert Storm** arrived, my first impression was that here was the software to justify my purchase. Could this be the first killer application for CD ROM?

The **Desert Storm** CD-ROM is described as a multimedia history of the Gulf war with text, graphics and audio. The publishers of the disc, Quanta Press and Compton's NewMedia, Inc, describe it as containing 'two databases of actual data' together with a 'thrilling electronic war strategy game.'

Book worms

The game, called **Coalition Command**, has been put together by a large and separate team from 4D Interactive Systems Inc, a member of whom is Dave Arneson, one of the original designers of **Dungeons and Dragons** in the 70s.

Coalition Command is described as a 'Datagame', and although it is run as a separate program to the databases, it makes extensive use of the information, sound and graphics available on the same disk.
The databases are the main content of the disk, and can most accurately be described as 2 books published on electronic media. The larger and most important one is an overall history of Desert Shield and Desert Storm prepared by an enormous team of US military authors. This work is titled *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War - Final Report to Congress* and was published in 3 paper volumes in April 1992 It is the official history of the campaign, written in the year following the end of the war, and with all the strengths and weaknesses which this implies. I have not seen the original volumes, but the full text content is certainly included on disk. The disk also includes several hundred colour photographs which I suspect have been added for the computer version. About one hundred sound-bites are included as well.

The second book included is *The Iraqi Army, Organisation and Tactics*, described as National Training Handbook no. 100-91, published 3rd January 1991. This appears to be a 15 chapter intelligence manual on the Iraqi forces specially prepared by Central Command intelligence services for distribution before the start of hostilities. This work is text only. Both books are accessed by an interface which can be used via DOS or Windows. The interface needs to be installed on a hard disk, and each one occupies about 1.8 Meg of hard disk space.

Sound and fury

The DOS interface is the same as that used in **Compton's Encyclopedia** which may be familiar to CD drive owners. It offers a choice of searching by title or topic to access the text. In the text (of the first book only) are scattered marginal symbols which can be clicked on to call up a photograph or play a sound. The pictures may also be accessed via an alphabetical list of short captions, or called up at random by a 'picture tour'. By far the majority of the disk space is taken up with graphics. There are over 200 megabytes of .GIF and .PCX files, each in both low (VGA) and high resolution (SVGA) versions, so that each photo is stored in 4 versions. I did not find the graphics especially interesting, mainly because there are no captions when the photos are viewed from within the text. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but only if one knows what one is looking at.

Browsers can read a very short caption if the photo is chosen from the picture finder, but to be of real value these graphics cried out for a detailed description and commentary. In most cases I got the impression that the pictures were of only marginal relevance to the text, and

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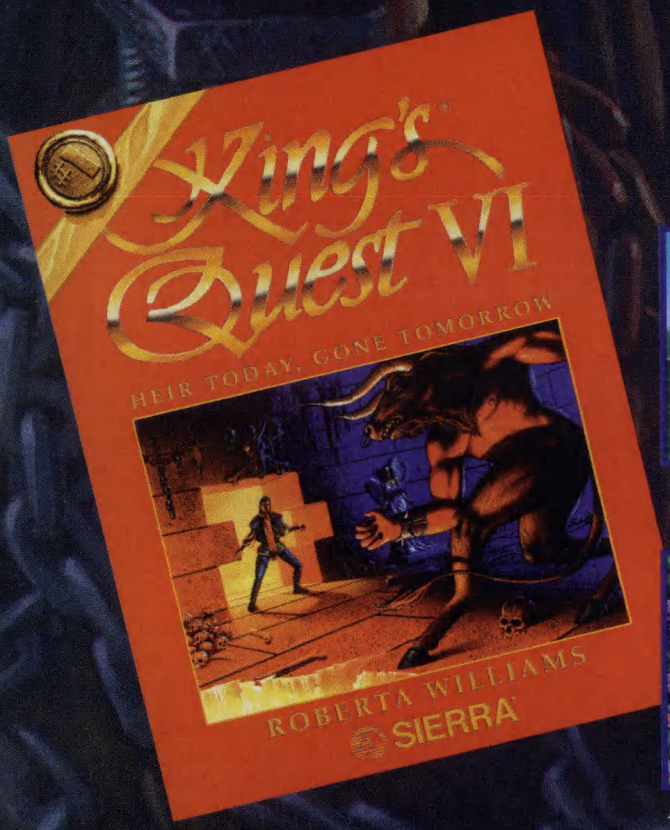

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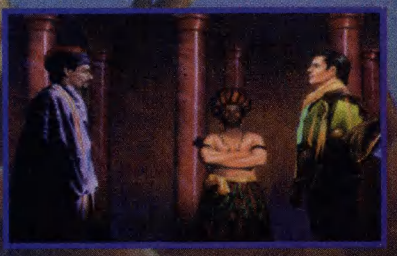

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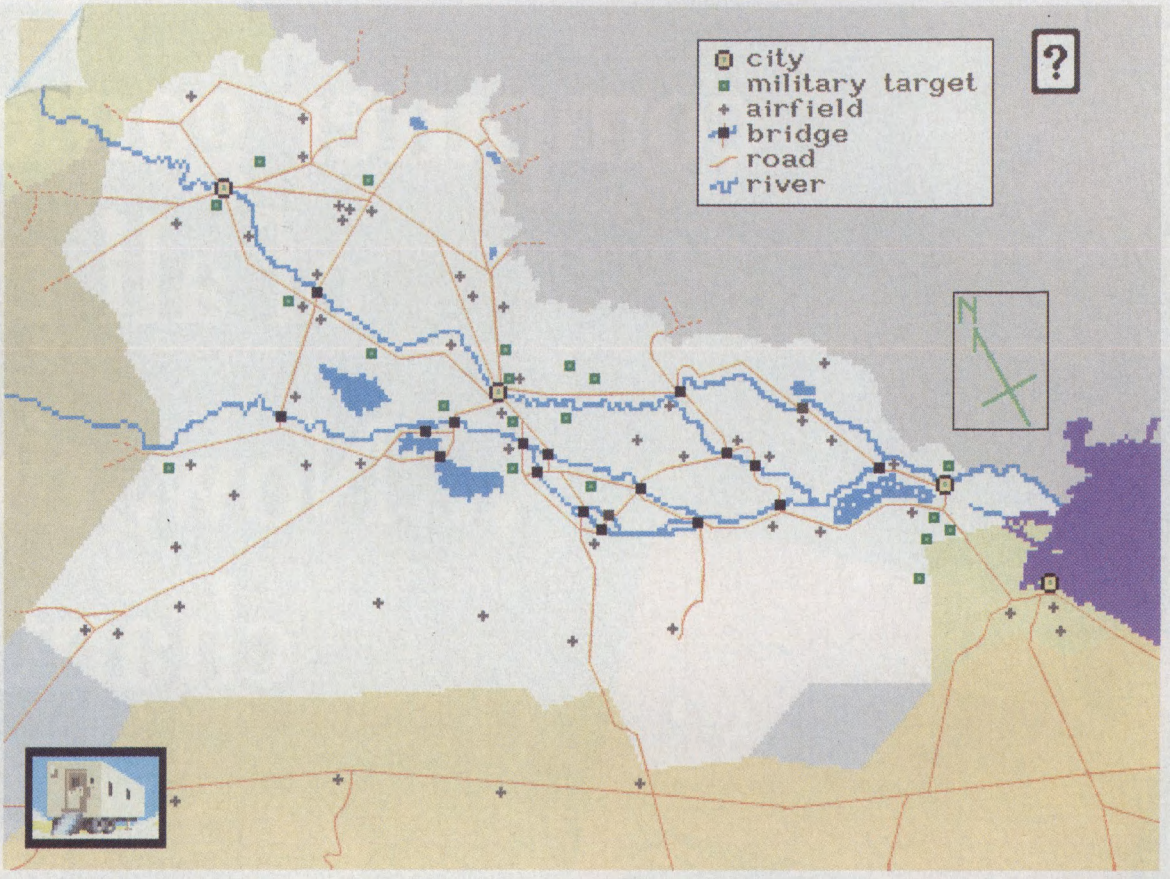

had been added because there had to be pictures included. The same could also be said of the sound bites.

The Windows version of the interface is very similar, except it additonally includes an alphabetical list of the sound bite captions called a sound finder which for some reason is absent in the DOS interface. Although I am not a great user or admirer of Windows, I found that I did prefer the Windows version of **Desert Storm**, which runs no more slowly than the DOS version.

Both interfaces include some rudimentary tools to record search paths, make bookmarks and copy sections of the text which could then be printed. I found these a little primitive; the notebook, through which text extracts can be printed, can only hold less than one A4 page at a time.

There are no hypertext links and I cannot say that I found the search facility to work very well. The easiest way to read the text was to start with the complete contents list and to zoom in on portions of potential interest.

Windows on the Desert

After a few hours use I found myself wondering what real advantages the electronic version had over a properly indexed and produced book. It was impossible to avoid the conclusion that given a choice, I would swap my disk for the 4 volumes it replaced.

Assuming the books are available for the same price (and this is a very big assumption - military history volumes are increasingly expensive) and I was buying them with my own funds, I would surely prefer the conventional media. The ultimate solution, for those who can afford it, would be to own and use both versions. I suspect that such dual-format publication may become the preferred, if expensive choice for this sort of work.

COALITION COMMAND

The blurb for this game refers to a 'very sophisticated, strategic level simulation of the command and control activities that took place in the Middle-East.' A separate well-written, but atrociously-bound leaflet describes how the game works. The player is assumed to have taken General Schwarzkopf's place following an accident, and plays the game from the perspective of his command trailer in the desert.

On loading the game the player is presented with a graphic of the trailer interior. There is a calendar displaying the date. If it is clicked on the game will advance to the next weekly turn. There is a telephone on the desk, and when it rings and is answered a picture of the caller appears. This may be Mr. Cheney the Defence Secretary, or General Powell the chief of staff. The telephone message is both written on screen and plays via the sound channel of the CD. The player may also initiate calls to seek advice. Neither the air or the ground war can be started before President Bush telephones to authorise it.

There is a map table which gives access to a

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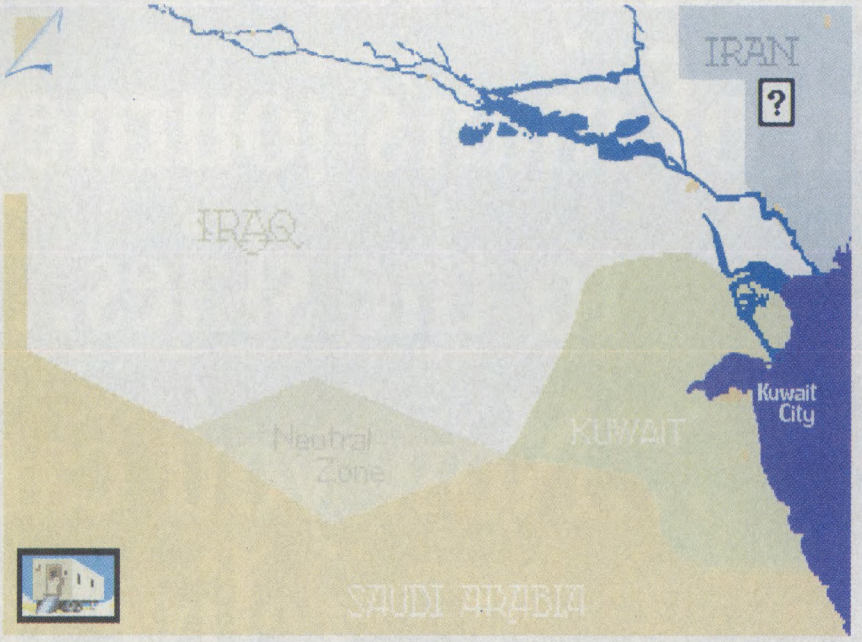

targeting map of all Iraq for the air war and an operational map of the southern Iraq, Kuwait and northern Saudi regions on which the position of both enemy and friendly ground units are marked. A small portable TV allows news broadcasts to be monitored. As a simplification only one event takes place each week, and the events may be those which did occur in the actual campaign, or new ones.

A desktop computer allows access to a windowing command menu which allows the player to control the game, gather intelligence and issue orders.The player can access intelligence reports on Iraqi dispositions,as well as his own air land and sea forces.

Units are given a mission and a general area to deploy in, and the deployment in detail is handled by the players staff in the context of a selected overall plan. Each turn the player can issue one press release (from a long predetermined list), and this together with the effects of random events and the orders given is used to calculate several scores which reflect the stability of the coalition, the attitude of the Israelis, the chances of a coup against Saddam Hussein, and so on.

The ideas, design concepts and design philosophy which I have briefly outlined above are all excellent. By the time I had read the manual and started to play, I was convinced that **Coalition Command** was indeed the first killer application for CD-ROM.

Quayle humor

Sadly it only took one complete game for me to realise that my hopes had been dashed. **Coalition Command** is fun and interesting to play once or twice, but it is no killer. The most overiding problem is that whatever the player does seems to have little effect on the course of the campaign. The campaign feels like a random walk through events, but always with the same overall structure.

In all three games, I played the air and ground war started at or just before the historical dates. Nothing the Iraqis did seemed to make any difference; the same events came up in each game in a different order, and with no real effect on play. Sometimes the events were simply inappropriate, for example referring to Iraqi civilian air raid casualties before the air war had even started.

The telephone messages from Bush, Cheney and Powell were fun, at least the first time. I particularly enjoyed those from Dan Quayle, who seems to have been used to insert a degree of light humour into the game. Unfortunately the same message can come up again and again in the same game, resulting in considerable tedium.

There is a great deal of detail in the historical order of battle of both sides, and in the coming and goings of units and their deployment. Fortunately the computer does it all automatically. The player can make changes, but most of the time there seems to be little point. It does not really matter where the units are placed, and the only adjustments I found it necessary to make were those advised by General Powell, and this was mainly to stop him phoning me up again and again with the same advice.

The only important decisions to be taken each turn seemed to be which press statement to release. Once the air war had started I adopted a policy of checking bomb damage statements each week and switching planes off those targets with a damage assessment greater than 200%. This seemed to work since I 'won' all the games - but I suspect that it may be impossible to lose.

Norman storms in

Once the land war starts the game is over and no more decisions can be taken. There is a sequence of photos and sounds from the database (a similar one precedes the start of the air war), then a fast moving map animation of the campaign, and finally General Schwarzkopf appears to offer his assessment of how things were handled and what the final scores were. These two last items do change according to how the game was played, but there is no way to save or review them. Since they represent the culmination and outcome of several hours play, this is a pity.

Finally, and most bizarrely, an animation of a handful of allied tanks attacking and defeating a dozen or so Iraqi ones plays for a few minutes before the program drops back to DOS. The animation is quite well done and not always the same, but to me it has no relevance to the rest of the game.

Coalition Command is the first game I have seen which is specially written to be published on CD-ROM. There are plenty of other titles, but all were originally available on floppy, and nearly all are completely unchanged from the originals. **Coalition Command** is a fascinating experiment and a bold step forward towards the future of computer games, but ultimately one that is flawed.

If the judgements above seem harsh, this is because, although the program is a step forward, it is a hasty and stumbling one. This game is not the killer application that will make gamers rush to buy CD-ROM drives. ❑

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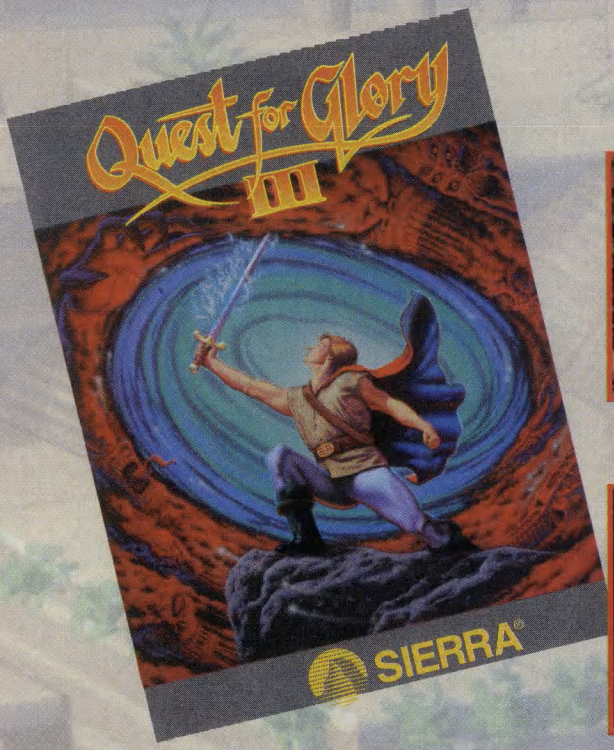

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BLOCK BUSTERS

Bumper busters this month featuring: Kyrandia, Spellcasting 301, Darklands, Clouds of Xeen, and . . .

Wizardry 7: Crusaders of the Dark Savant

Wizardry: Crusaders of the Dark Savant

Designed by
D W Bradley

Published by
Sir Tech Software, Inc.

Systems
PC (Amiga, Macintosh versions will be released next year)

Supports
Ad-Lib, Roland LAPC-1/ MT-32,Covox Voice/ Sound Master, Sound Blaster or PC Speaker

Wizardry *fans can rejoice! The bigger and better follow-up to* ***Bane*** *is finally here! Of course, many* ***Wizardry*** *fans are already playing the game by now and know about all the improvements; VGA resolution and 256 colors; more animation; complete musical soundtrack; auto-mapping; outdoor (as wellas indoor) campaigns, with sun-rise, sun-set effects; manual protection (look up a word) and not the dreaded dark-brown, no-copy, not-be-able-to-read paper; and that's just a teaser for what's under the big-top; there's much more!*

This is a very impressive package engineered by D W Bradley and each of its' new features deserves closer examination; but, Unca is in ***The Boots of Re*** *tavern and ready to tell you how to get started. 'Hey,' but those who aren't familiar with* ***Wizardry*** *are yelling, 'what is* ***Wizardry****?'*

Wizardry *has always been the leader in providing thrills and chills for the dungeon dippers, those who love to take a party of their own making and hack and slash their way through hordes of monsters on their way to glory. They lovingly gather weapons and armor and spells and gold and have a good old time solving puzzles involving hidden doors, and pits, and mazes; but, in the earlier games text was them main means of telling the player what they were doing and seeing.* ***Bane of the Cosmic Forge*** *changed the* ***Wizardry*** *format to show the players more and tell less.* ***Crusaders*** *has gone even much further, incorporating more of* ***Wizardry*** *fans' demands for the latest in RPG show-me technology.*

One of the innovations that began in ***Bane*** *was the multiple ending.* ***Crusaders*** *follows with the multiple beginning! Depending on choices the party would make in* ***Bane****, they could end the game in three different ways, each of them leading to a different beginning in* ***Crusaders;*** *each of which serve to align the party to one of the major characters in the game. Players do not have to have played* ***Bane*** *to enjoy* ***Crusaders****. Unca, for example, has started a new party, which begins the game unaligned with any of the major characters.*

Those that like computer fantasy role playing, and particularly the traditional 'hack & slash' school with mucho *combat (well over 200 hours of playing time), will love* ***Crusaders****. This is one of, if not* ***the*** *major RPG of the year.*

Tips

The setting is Unca's favorite tavern, **The Boots of Re**, and half- dozing in an armchair by the fireplace, is Unca, a Falstaffian figure with a white beard and leathered face. Countless scars cover his visible skin. We buy him a tankard of ale that he consumes in one mighty gulp, smacks his lips, and eyes us with a glint in his eye. Okay, we're gonna tip-thru **Crusaders**, eh? Heh-heh. Unca laughs and claps us on the back.Never mind! Let's get started. There are dozens of head-bangers out of work, and many to choose from in order to make up a party. I chose to be a Feldpur Monk in this incarnation, and selected a Dracon Thief, a Dwarf Priest, a Dwarf Valkryie, a Faery Mage, and a Feldpur Samurai to take with me on this adventure. My Thief changed to a Ninja, later, when he had the necessary attribute points.

Adventurers can experiment some with their party, but they'd better make sure they have someone who can open chests for them and that they have some hardy fighting types in the first four positions whom all have varied spell powers.

Basic spells spell casters should have when they can get them include Sleep, Heal, Energy Blast, Direction, Armor Plate, Enchanted Blade, Silence, Dispel Undead, Blinding Flash, Stamina, Cure Paralyzation, Cure Disease, Cure Poison, and Air Pocket.

In the beginning . . .

My party started **Crusaders** on the planet Lost Guardia - naked in a dense forest. We stood awed for a moment by the sounds and beauty of the forest with birds flying through the trees; but quickly found basic armor and weapons in our backpacks and equipped ourselves before we started exploring. Luckily we did, because the biggest glowing Moths I've ever seen attacked us! Rocky, our Faery Mage put them to sleep, and the rest of us soon dispatched the dangerous critters; but not before they frightened several of us out of our wits with their shrill cries.

We found a treasure chest near the river, not far away. There was a map in the chest that I gave to Thumbs, our Thief. I made sure earlier that he had mapping skills so he could keep a record of our travels. He put the map in his pack, and would just choose to 'Use' it when we all wanted a look.

We found a paved road that led to New City, and to a field of poppies that would put us to sleep whenever we tried to go through it. (Now, doesn't that sound like **Wizard of Oz?** I'll bet an Air Pocket spell would get us through, but we didn't have one at the time.)

A branch of the road led to a small starter dungeon (only two levels). We spent some time getting experience points in that dungeon. The monsters there are not difficult to overcome and it has a great healing fountain that restores all stamina, health and spell points (but doesn't resurrect the dead or cure disease).

Strategic spells

A strategy we developed while exploring the dungeon and forest (and later New City) was to cast our lasting spells such as Enchanted Sword and Direction, take a drink to renew the points

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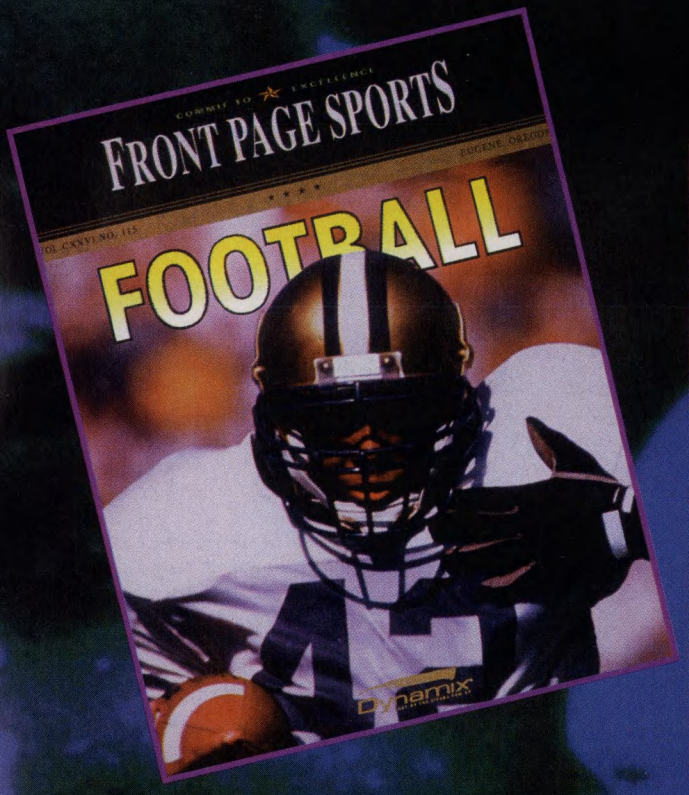

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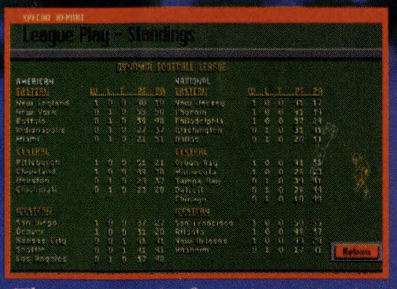

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lost, and cast them again. We would do this several times. That way we could wander around exploring with the spells in effect for long periods of time. When the spells ran out or we needed healing, we would come back to the fountain, rather than resting elsewhere. Resting only encouraged more battles.

In the Dungeon we found a flyer advertising a sale on armor, and we gained admittance to New City by telling the guard the name of the shop owner from the flyer. (We also found a couple of chests in the Dungeon, one of which had an Amulet of Life that would resurrect the dead, but take away Vitality points in doing so.)

New City

In New City, we found the armor shop and were able to buy some of the cheap armor available with the gold we had, but Thumbs, our Thief, stole enough armor that we were able to sell it back to the shopkeeper for enough gold to get the better pieces we wanted!

We paid an Innkeeper the money he asked for to repeat a rumor he had heard about an illegal arms dealer in town and what the two words were to encourage the arms dealer to open his shop to us. (It's the street name for what he was doing.) When he did, Thumbs once again practiced his Skull Duggery skills and we were able to get the best of weapons available.

The Innkeeper also had some special fruit for sale that we needed later at Orkogre Castle. We found the Umpani and T'Rang embassies in New City but couldn't gain admittance to them nor through a second door in a house in the forbidden zone as well as a second door in another house in New City. We found what we thought was the access to Old City, but couldn't get through there, either. We could later in the game.

There are other puzzles in New City not solvable until later: getting the wand in the museum, for instance. Before visiting the museum, we found its admission price inside the local bank vault.

The museum

We did find a stone in the museum, but I picked up a disease in getting the stone, but luckily, by that time, I had found Father Rulae at the local temple, and asked him to heal me and when we offered "our all," he took every coin we had, but stepped aside from a door he was guarding that led to a miraculous healing fountain. (Later we found that this fountain even resurrected the dead--and without any loss of vitality!) We also learned not to go to Father Rulae until we spent all our money on weapons or arms so he couldn't take much. Heh-heh.

There's a statue in the middle of the pool on the temple grounds that needs searching. Everyone needed swimming skills of at least ten to get in the water without drowning.

There's a prison in the city, and whenever we walked by, some poor fool was always whispering to us to set him free. When we were strong enough to fight the guards we did just that. We needed the code letters we found on a card we found elsewhere in New City to get us past the color-coded door, however.

Before we released the prisoner we first talked to him about Orkogre castle. When we did, he rewarded us for freeing him by giving us directions to the castle as well as words to say to the king of Orkogre. He also gave us a letter to show Lord Galiere who guards the road leading there.

New City has a second exit out of the city on the west side. We followed the road northwest until we met Lord Galiere who told us to go west through the forest to find the castle. It took us several hours to find the Castle. It was a long way west, with some jogs around clumps of trees that impeded our western progress. We finally found the path north through the forest that led to the dungeon.

Orkogre castle

We solved Orkogre castle only with lengthy exploration (six hours). We needed the special fruit item in our inventory and we found a very important shield in one of the bedrooms that helped us get into the door with bloodstains outside of it. We had to 'Search' the bloodstain to get an idea of how to use the shield. Solving this puzzle took a little 'reflection,' heh-heh. We still didn't get the door open until we were facing the right direction, however.

We found a ring of keys that opened all of the prison cells. We had to explore the cells not once, but twice in order to find all the levers and buttons there were available. Some would only pop up after we'd gone somewhere else. We even had to go back a third time to find a pit opening that we jumped into to get to the Inner Sanctum.

We found a chest the King told us about but it didn't have anything in it. That's when we found that the NPCs in the game can beat you to finding various maps available in the game. The missing map disclosed the location of the Hidden Temple at Munkharama. (We could have eventually purchased the map from the NPC who stole it, but we found the Hidden Temple at Munkharama, without it.) The final battle at Orkogre castle was a tough one, but we found firestorm potions that helped us... More tips next month.

'Unca'

Fables and Fiends: The Legend of Kyrandia

This is a lovely little adventure game from Westwood Studios. Very little, quite lovely. Twenty hours of concentrated play or a good week of easy sessions are enough to complete the game. Not much bang for the bucks, but lots of display fireworks. ***Kyrandia*** *is Westwood's first major effort since breaking ties with SSI (****Eye of the Beholder I and II****) and jumping to Virgin. The new relationship is off to a very good start.*

Kyrandia *has a standard point and click interface with a very simple icon menu. The graphics are marvelously detailed and cleverly animated. Some of the character motions are a bit herky jerky, but charmingly so. Gameplay is linear without being restrictive although each section's quests must be completed before moving to a new area of the game. Meandering about in the forest is a real delight. Every frame is different and identifiable which adds a sense of realism to the usually mundane searches required to solve puzzles and quests. The characters that inhabit Kyrandia are very well delineated, and somewhat sassy rather than cutesy. What a relief! My favorite character...a rather droll dragon with an eye for sarcasm. The Ultimate Bad Guy, Malcolm, is an annoying little twerp with a predictable bag of tricks. Reflecting upon his fate, I would have preferred a chance to strangle him.*

While ***Kyrandia*** *is not a really difficult game, some of the puzzles are quite involved. There is one major section that requires mapping and a willingness to don the boots of re after each move. With the following tips in hand, have a happy traverse of* ***Kyrandia****. I certainly enjoyed the trip.*

Tips

Check out Grandad's place...completely! Be sure to get some leafy instructions before departing the treehouse. The number of stones in the tray is significant. There is a temple to the NE of the treehouse. There will be a chance to cry over some

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You see: Short Sword
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environmental damage for profit. Roses can be exchanged, and offerings are in at altars. Chase Merith with gusto. Let Herman handle the tools and don't cross over the bridge until Herman handles that too.

That Darm Dragon

The answer to a ticklish problem is found only after life has been restored to the wastelands. A trio of seedy nuts provide a hole lot of fun. Health can be restored to all creatures in Kyrandia. Gemology and a mania for birthstones will serve the adventurer well. A full set of birthstones can be collected and stored at the altar. The Sunstone is first, the Ruby is last, and the two stones in the middle are random for each game. Save after using the Sunstone and try a seasonal sequence for the two middle stones. A return trip to the home forest might be needed to find exactly the right combination. Toot back to Darm and pay close attention to the dragon - just for kicks.

Twerp Toss

After mixing it up with Malcolm the Maddener over the relative merits of his mama's taste, a swift use of a ghetto toothpick and some cool jazz will allow entry to the toughest part of **Kyrandia**, a serpentine grotto of darkness and sudden death. This is the section of the game that requires a map - or an inordinate amount of luck! I saved the game before entering each new room, and had to restore at least half of the time. Bring all of the leftover gems, fruits, flowers, and goodies to the grotto entrance for storage and save before entering.

The grotto is eight rooms high and sixteen rooms wide. Square 1,1 is the South East corner of an 8,16 grid. The entrance places the adventurer at 5,1. Once the grate clanks shut, a complete set of stones will be needed to exit. The trick to navigating safely in the cave is to carry lighted fireberries into each room and leave one to light the way. Darkness always results in a glaring death. Fireberries are fragile and can travel only three rooms before becoming powerless. Fireberry Bushes are located at 6,1; 5,4; 4,5; 6,7; 4,9; 7,10; 4,11; 2,11; 4,13; 6,15; and 3,15. The altar room is at 7,9. Rocks are found in several rooms, the Key room is at 3,15 and an emerald can be found at 5,14. Wishful thinking will serve success and complete exploration of every room can only be done after chasm crossings become mundane.

Cauldron Cuisine

Zanthia wants what every amulet needs - be selfish and generous. Global warming should be a chilling experience. Learn to cook up some sparkling potions: one blue; one yellow; and two reds. I never found a cookbook, but the combinations required are Sapphire/Blueberry, Emerald/Tulip, and Garnet/Orchid. There appears to be an unlimited supply of flasks available, just pop in and out of the cabin a few times and an empty appears. A stockpile of each color potion will allow some fun experimentation.

After making like a late rabbit, take a batch of potions to the crystal blender which is South, South, East, South, South, West, and North of the woodside trapdoor. Potions can be sacrificed to yield Purple and Orange concoctions, useful for transformation or transportation. Another spot of interest can be reached from the same trapdoor by stepping North, North, East, East, East, and North. I never found out how to use the rainbow stone hidden in the tree stump.

The stolen chalice can be recovered by playing Alice with a purple passion. The thief is a poor little soul that can't reach ripe fruit for himself so be charitable. Remain in the cups until the endgame.

To move onto the castle and the final confrontations, the chalice, an orchid and a glass of juice are required. Save the game and try to fly out to the castle as a wisp for a real thrill! Alteration and a fantastic flight land the adventurer in a sad but beneficial plight.

Mother Says

A really good boy is neither seen nor heard. This section of the game, inside the castle, is quite devious and the animation is terrific. I had a blast running around the balconies and searching everywhere. There is quite a collection of junk available. Only a two items are critical to success at the end, a crown and a scepter both of which are hidden, like a purloined letter, obviously.
The Kitchen will provide something to wield and the Library, something to wear. In the Library, the avid scholar will succeed when the selections are open and orderly. Do grab the hat before entering the passageway. Only the bluish can pass through the arch, and only the careful searcher will find that loose stone in the floor.

Balcony Browse

Scoot around the balcony and check out every doorway. I was able to find and take at least one thing from each room, but found no use for any of the knick-knacks. Don't let Herman saw you, and note that healing can have very restful effect on folks. Once the savage beast is quieted, step into his room and play a happy tune on the chimes. The correct sequence of notes, Do-Fa-Mi-Ra, will reveal a key part of the puzzle.

The entrances to the endgame chamber are at the North West corner of the grand hall on the ground floor of the castle. Correct placement of the Scepter, Crown and Chalice will trigger the endgame sequence. Save the game before placing any of them since they can not be removed from their cushions. Left side, Scepter; Middle, Crown; Right side, Chalice.

When the door opens, enter the gem chamber and disappear quickly which will leave Malcolm to reflect upon his own tricks. This will also cure the Kyragem and trigger the endgame show. A really neat and satisfying conclusion to a good game.

Joan McKeown

Fables and Fiends:The Legend of Kyrandia

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Westwood Associates

Published by
Virgin Games

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PC

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256 color VGA

Supports
Mouse, most soundcards

Spellcasting 301: Spring Break. Tips

The player might want to pick up a newspaper from the front lawn of the campus before shoving off for sun and fun. The news section has a clue on how to win the bull fight, and a classified ad will help Ernie to find Hillary Tickingclock after landing. When the carpet starts to fail over the student vacation spot, start dumping all excess baggage.

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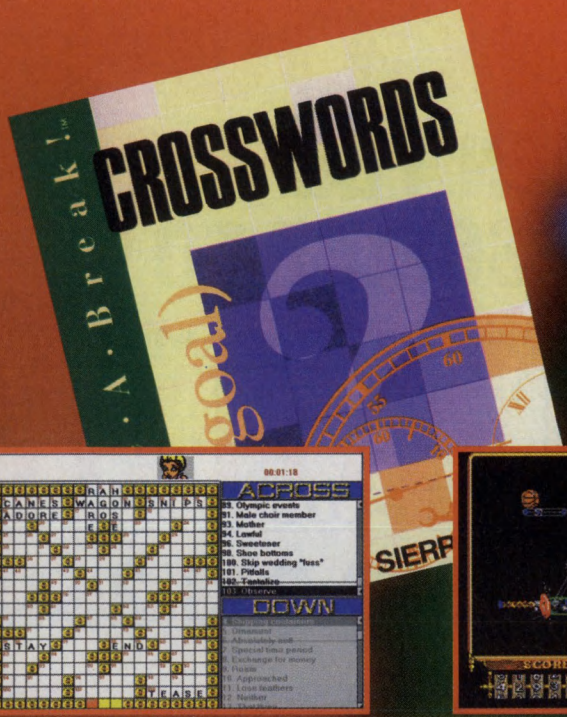

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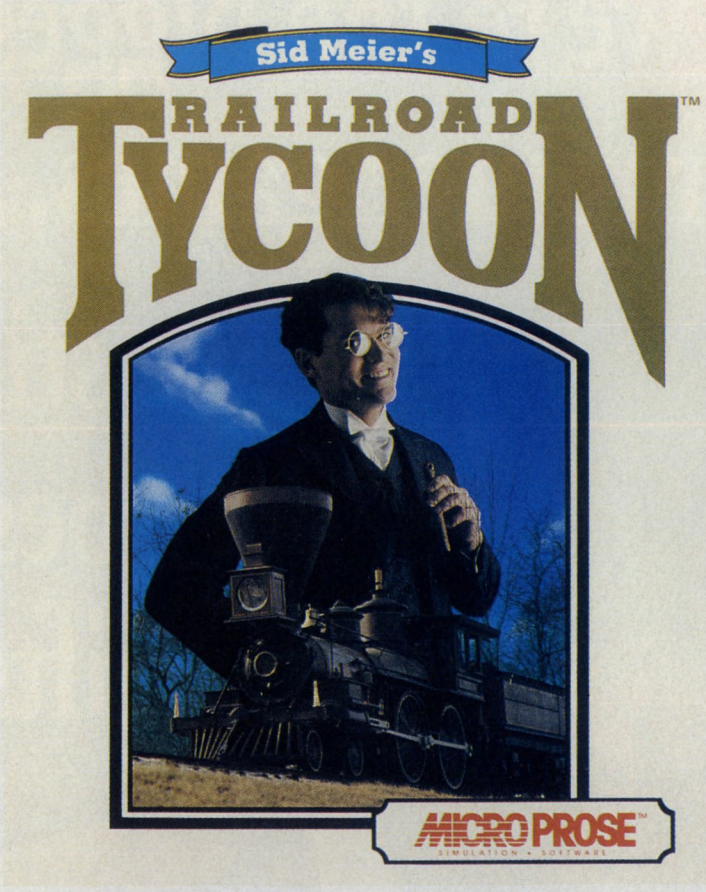

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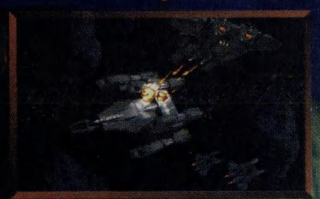

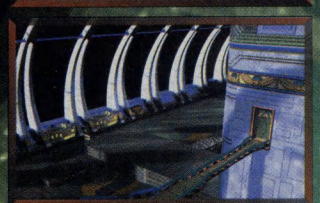

DOUGLAS 92

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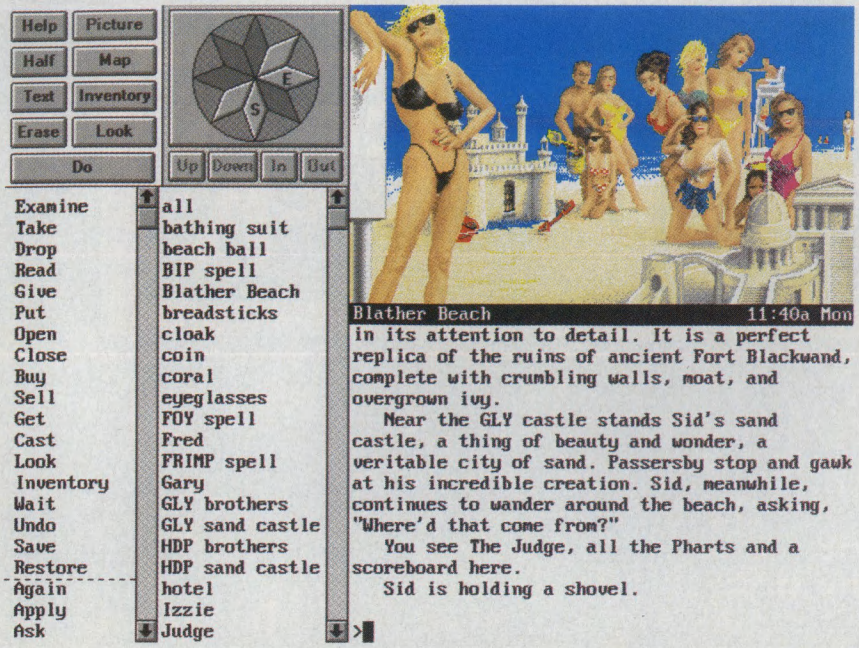

The first contest should be easy, especially for those who have played the previous games in this series. Ernie can make each of the weights lighter for his fratmate Ralph by using one of his level two spells. This should get the Pharts an early lead over the Yus of 45 points to 40. After The Judge makes her entrance and lays down the rules, there's plenty of time to explore and prepare for the first real challenge.

To win all the contests and get maximum points, the player will need to purchase items from the shops in town. If money is tight, items may be sold to the Pawn Shop and reclaimed later for twice the price. The Squat machine in the casino will produce a steady payoff, but first the house itself must be set straight. Look underneath the building for a way to even the odds.

Bimbo bash

Sunday night is the fraternity kick-off party, and Ernie needs to lure some unsuspecting girls up to HDP's suite. Some girls show up in the hotel lobby at about 6:00 pm, and listening to them reveals what these bimbos are looking for. A pun is involved here, as well as an object found in the restaurant and something purchased from the hardware store. Give one of the items to them and carry the other one up to the party before 10:00 pm.

Ernie will be thrown in the Fort Naughtytail jail five times by Sherriff Wormpoop if he goes for all the points, and there are five different ways to escape. Each trick only works once, however, as the jail cell is modified after each escape. The things needed for the jailbreaks are the UPPSSY spell, the package of breadsticks, the shovel, the can of rust spray, and the slimfish from the fish market.

Castle building

Monday afternoon's castle-building contest requires the shovel and a magic spell. Listen to the Pharts on the beach Sunday and give the shovel to the one who seems best qualified. Cast the spell on him and he'll erect a masterpiece that will win the contest for HDP. After the contest, an important item is found on the beach that will be needed to repair the bridge over the stream, but it must be modified first with a spell.

The player should have time before Tuesday to get set up for events later in the week. Ernie should visit Hillary Tickingclock to get the RATANT spell, reading the student paper's classified section or talking to Otto in the Polkaball Hall of Fame tells him what room she's in. He should also find a way into the Mansion Grounds by Sunday evening. The dog near the fence can dig through, but he needs incentive and lots of time.

Getting the maximum points in Tuesday's belly flop contest requires exploring the roc's nest on the other side of the stream. Look at each of the HDPs when they show up at the hotel pool to see who is best suited for this event, then attract the big bird's attention to him. This was one of the funniest events in the game, not to be missed!

The player needs the SPUNJ spell from the Mansion Grounds, the RATANT
spell from Hillary's room, and items from the grocery and surf shop to win the drink mixing and guzzling contest Tuesday evening. Casting RATANT on the SPUNJ spell yields a fruit-enlarging spell, and Ernie's spell book already contains a drink making spell.

The RATANT spell will have to be cast on itself at one point to create the RATTAN spell, then undone later. The sorcerer's guild in the top of the lighthouse tower is where the player finds a paper explaining how this is done. Explore the fort to find the needed ingredient.

Wet t-shirt

For Wednesday morning's wet t-shirt competition, Ernie needs to enlist the aid of one of the female wrestlers in the Sand Bar. Roxanne Rollinthehay needs a way to get a good grip on her opponent, and 'stick' her to the mat. She'll show up for the competition in time, but will still need assistance due to her underdeveloped chassis. Getting the maximum points requires giving what it appears she needs to the one doesn't, then casting a spell that will reverse her condition.

By Wednesday morning the player should have made some progress with the quests that Ernie is assigned by the presiding mage of the Sorcerer's Guild.

These tasks are the only way to raise the sorcerer's level so he can cast the higher level spells needed later in the game. The light bulb can be repaired at the prospector's shop in the ghost town, if the bridge is fixed.

Level 4

After fixing the light bulb, Ernie will reach level 4 and be able to cast the man-to-merman BIGFINNO spell located at the end of the jetty. However, there isn't any way to carry anything at all over there, so the spell is a one-shot trip to Mer City. The player needs to pick up everything (follow the mermaid!) and find a way to get it back up. Watching the lobsterman work is the key here. The Great Seal is in the chest that is guarded by the jellyfish, type 'make sandwich' to get a hint how to dispatch this threat.

The bullfight on Wednesday afternoon requires that the player buy another item from the grocery store, slipping it into the bull's water trough at the right time. The bull must be distracted in order to get to the trough, cast a mutated BIP spell or use the pool float from Sid's book bag. Reading the news section of the student paper gives a clue to how the float will help.

Bodysurfing

The maximum points for the bodysurfing contest Thursday are gained by making sure Fred is awake, and by getting the blessings of the Pelorian sea god. Some cold water in a jug is a good idea, but it must be special water. Look on the registration form (in the game documentation) to find his room.

To give the Pharts a healthy tan for Thursday afternoon's contest, read the labels on the lotion bottles. Putting some color back in Scarlet's life will open the way to the basement where the lemon juice can be found.

The Four Seahorses of the Apocalypse should be found by Friday in time for the final puzzles. To make use of the map of Sitnalta, follow the arrows exactly, putting the seahorses in their proper place. If the throne of Sitnalta doesn't appear, the player doesn't have the seahorses in the right places or the route wasn't followed correctly.

I haven't touched on every puzzle in this game, but the player should not have too much difficulty with the rest. The game is plenty of fun to play, and making mistakes can be part of the fun. In fact,

Spellcasting 301: Spring Break

Published by
Legend Entertainment
Reviewed issue 24

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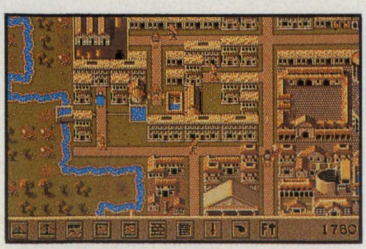

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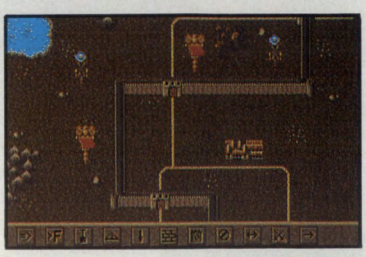

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there is a lot of places where casting the UPPSSY spell can very humorous, even worth replaying portions of the game to try it out.

Greg Ellsworth

Darklands tips

The easiest way to fame and glory in **Darklands** is to assemble a suitable party. The following is a recommended party composition that enables the adventurers to be asprepared as possible while still retaining flexibility.

All characters should have at a minimum Endurance and Strength in the 25-30 range. This is important because it determines the types of armor and weapons characters can equip without becoming too encumbered. It also determines how well they can absorb the punishment of battle without collapsing or departing the medieval realms for good. Agility should also be in the 20-30 range, as this helps in climbing and avoiding blows. Perception, Intelligence, Charisma and Divine Favor will be discussed further on.

The first character created can be the party's primary leader. This person will normally deal with the various inhabitants of Germany. This adventurer should possess high Charisma, decent Perception and be proficient with the Speak Common skill. In addition, Streetwise skill is also handy. A wealthy urban family or noble background is helpful.

The second person should specialize in intellectual matters. This character would be the one to deal with universities and monasteries. High Intelligence is a must. This member should also be very proficient with the Alchemy, Speak Latin and Read/Write skills. A noble or wealthy background would be suitable. A Master Alchemist would be a good career goal.

The third member can be the outdoors person. Good Perception and Agility scores will help this character. Woodwise, Riding, and Stealth skills would also be an asset. The character should also learn Healing. Rural commoners would be a likely family background, with hunter and soldier being a good career path for picking up these skills.

The final individual could be the worldly sort. This member should have high Perception and fair Charisma and Agility scores. Streetwise, Artifice, Stealth and Speak Common would all be acceptable skills to concentrate on. This character would probably start life as an urban commoner or craftsman. This person would be a good leader in dungeons because of the ability to spot traps and secret passages, and open locked chests.

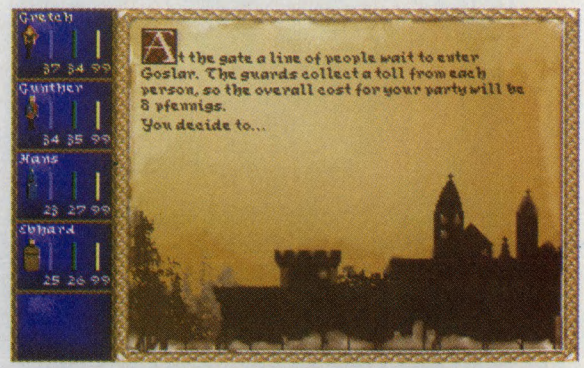
Skills

Characters who start adventuring earlier in life may not have as many skills, but skills can go up with use and tutoring. Attribute scores are almost impossible to permanently raise, but will decrease with age. The trade-off is a less skilled party member who is young enough to learn needed skills. The all time greatest fighter isn't much good if he easily collapses from low endurance. The one exception may be for the party alchemist. It is often worthwhile to gain master status because of the better philosopher stone and more alchemical formulas.

Don't get overly concerned about weapons training during character formation, as combat will rapidly improve the various martial disciplines. One character should concentrate on Impact Weapons, one on Flail Weapons, and the last two on Edged Weapons. This will give the party the ability to utilize the different high quality weapons found or awarded throughout the adventure. In addition, it might prove beneficial if the alchemist has some experience with Thrown Weapons as this is the primary means of delivering offensive potions during battle.

Virtue

Members' Virtue will also climb as the party performs good deeds. This will allow invocation of a greater number of saints with less cost. All characters should learn as many saints as possible whenever given the opportunity. When the party visits a city, they should call on monasteries and universities to learn new saints. Monasteries outside cities are also good sources of knowledge, as


Gretch
37 34 99
Gunther
34 35 99
Hans
23 27 99
Ebhard
25 26 99
At the gate a line of people wait to enter Goslar. The guards collect a toll from each person, so the overall cost for your party will be 8 pfennigs.
You decide to...

well as talking to hermits. It is always a good idea to make a donation before enquiring about the use of libraries. Parties should take notes on what saints are available at particular locations. When a particular obscure saint is needed to stop the Wild Hunt, the party won't have to rediscover the correct site for learning the required information.

Improving Religion Training helps the character regain Divine Favor quicker. The easiest way to regain Divine Favor is by going to confession in a small village. This will also tip off the party if the hamlet is practicing satanic rituals. If it is, confront the village Shulze and accuse his village of satanic practices. This always results in battle, but is an easy way to find out about the date for the witches' High Sabbat.

Alchemy

Alchemists should avail themselves of any opportunities to acquire new formulas, whether by trade or purchase. All characters should receive some training in alchemy during their adventuring. Often an alchemist will trade a really awesome formula to a character who has no clue about alchemy. This can help avoid some of the frustration of being unable to use a new formula. Alchemists should note also the availability of rare components such as white cinnabar, manganese, marsh vapor, naphtha, orpiment, and black bean. Visit the foreign traders' pavilions as well as healers and pharmacists for reagents. Unfortunately, availability by city changes with each world created, so good note taking is a must for each game world. Upgrading the party's philosopher stone whenever the opportunity presents itself is also a good idea, although it may cost quite a bit at universities.

Weapons

Whenever the party finds armor or weapons with quality above 25, they should purchase them. Helping merchant caravans fight off bandit attacks usually result in them awarding the party a weapon with a quality above 40. Fighting battles with dwarves occasionally results in the company finding higher quality armor. Again, it may prove beneficial keeping good notes on product availability. Since wealth isn't a primary goal, spend the money to get the party the very best equipment.

Bowyers, armorers, and swordsmiths may also be able to provide weapons training. Tinkerers can teach the Artifice skill.

Darklands

Published by
Microprose
Reviewed issue 24

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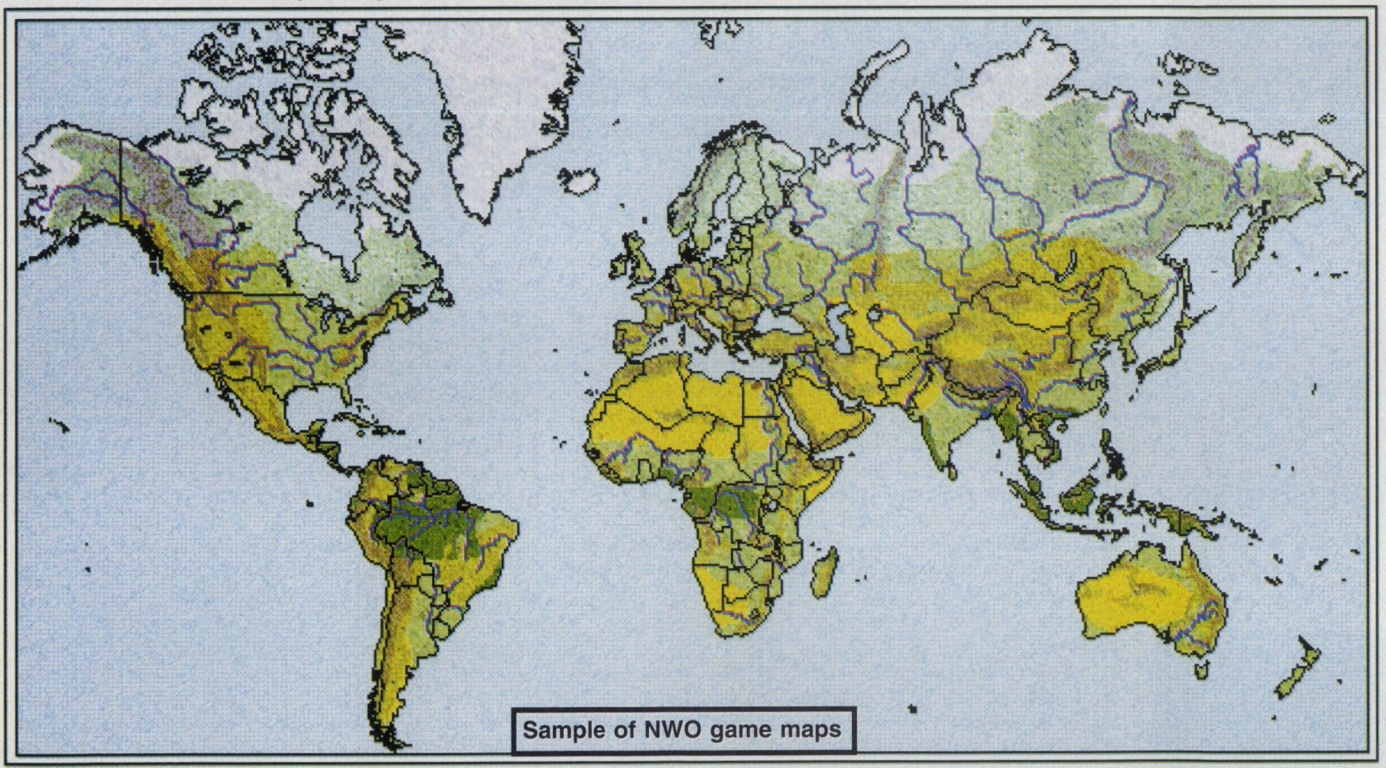

Sample of NWO game maps

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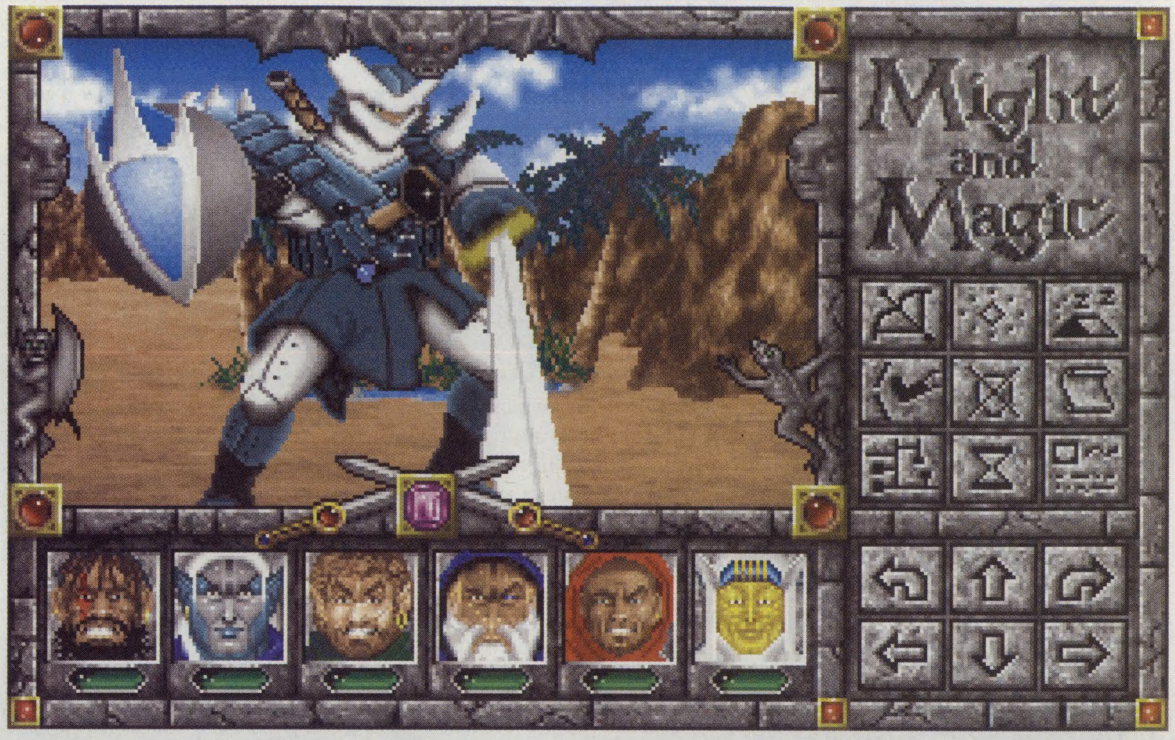

Physicians can train in the healing arts. Monasteries are good sources for various intellectual skills training, as are universities. Astrologers provide alchemical tutoring. I have not found out if Clothmaker guilds are useful for anything besides adding local color. Of course, all this schooling comes for a price, but is well worth the time and cost.

Be careful trying alchemical preparations while staying at inns. One of my heroes blew up two inns which is both costly financially as well as damaging to the local reputation. Parties are also not welcome to take up residence anymore, which usually means no further tutoring in that city. Alchemical work is usually best performed in the countryside where a failure has little impact. Call upon saints to help raise alchemical skills before mixing dangerous potions such as Arabian Fire or Breath of Death. Have someone guard the campsite to prevent surprise visits. If the party is approached, they can usually bribe the leader of the guards to stay in the area for a week.

Quests

Parties should concentrate on building skills before tackling the major quests such as the witches and Templars. There are numerous small quests to undertake, and they can be a good source of experience as well as providing cash and gear. Always talk to peasants and find out if a lord of a keep is evil or just. Freeing them from a tyrant's yoke will improve your local reputation as well as boost individual's virtue scores. Check with bankers for any special tasks they may have as they usually pay quite well. Following up on rumors is also a good way to gain fame. Undertaking missions assigned by town governments helps improve reputation in that city.

Helping miners can be especially lucrative. The party often receives rare reagents as part of the reward. When facing the doors to go further, use care about choosing the answer. A wring answer has nasty results, usually permanent lowering of an attribute. When faces always lie or speak truth, choose silver. Portugal doesn't belong in the group. Use a missile to knock the hat out of the hand. The gold knob opens the door because the silver knob doesn't. A grandson is handy to know. Gold doesn't know the truth. The puzzles are easily solved using logic. Try writing down the different clues to help visualize the answers. Next month we'll discuss specific quests, and some helpful hints to get through them.

Curtis Suddarth

Might and Magic: Clouds of Xeen

Designed by
Jon Van Canaghen

Published by
New World Computing

Systems
PC

Graphics
256 color VGA

Sound
Roland/GS, AdLib, Soundblaster/Pro Sound Master II, Pro Audio Spectrum, Sound Source

Might and Magic: Clouds of Xeen

The New World representative wrote in his cover letter that came with the review copy that 'This game will blow you away!' (in all uppercase letters). After typing the command to start the game, I leaned back and braced myself as the introduction loaded and lo and behold I was immediately blown away by a loud onrush of music! So that's what he meant. Now the game definitely had my attention, but I have seen my share of games where a lot of effort went into the introduction and endgame sequence, but the remainder of the game was just so-so.
The game is filled with beautiful VGA graphics, animated monsters who display expressions when hit, and three dimensional objects can be viewed from any side. The music score is excellent, digitized voices are clear and lifelike, and there are numerous realistic sound effects. In combat, clubs and staves make wooden 'clunks', swords 'clang', bows 'twang' and special attacks are audible. For example, orcs vomit a putrid odor, complete with a realistic retching sound.

*The ultimate goal of **Clouds of Xeen** is straightforward, the player starts in Vertigo with a band of six novice adventurers. They have been contacted through their dreams by Crodo, King Roland's trusted mage. Crodo has been locked in a high tower by a newcomer who has somehow bewitched the king and whose intent can be nothing but evil. The player must develop the party, gain experience, spells, weapons and armor to be able to confront Lord Xeen and banish him from the land*

*A new feature added since **Isles of Terra** is an auto notetaking capability that keeps track of quests that the party has accepted. It also records the locations of wells, fountains and shrines that temporarily enhance character statistics, and clues or special words they have found.*

The main game ends with the defeat of Xeen, but the main villain escapes to the 'Darkside' of the world. It appears the characters will be able to transfer to the sequel to this game, using pyramids on the surface to travel to the other side when the moons are properly aligned. The next game promises higher level creatures, more quests and more powerful items, and I for one can't wait.

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Tips

For the player who just wants to get right into the game, the default party supplied with the game are just fine for playing in either Adventurer or Warrior mode. If a custom party is desired, the player should be able to create six suitable characters very quickly, thanks to the excellent character generator. Don't be overly concerned about rolling perfect characters, there are plenty of places where statistics can be raised permanently.

A good party will have at least four characters who can cast spells. There should be three good fighters, one robber, one cleric and one sorcerer. One or two of the fighters can be spellcasters as well, but due to their added ability they will advance more slowly.

There is only one advantage to having an all human party, that is that all the characters begin with the swimming skill. This will allow them to quickly complete the quest for Orothin at F3 (9,6) by retrieving his bone whistle at E4 (5,14). Orothin rewards the party with 15,000 experience and then the statues at F3 (12,2) and F3 (12,8) will teach the party the Cure Disease and Cure Poison spells, respectively.

Level 3

If the party is of mixed races, this is not a problem. After cleaning up Vertigo, the characters should all be able to reach level 3. A robber gains experience for every grate or treasure chest he opens, and may soon have twice the experience that the other members have. At level 3, the party should be able to hold their own in the Red Dwarf mines, which are most quickly entered by using the magic words 'Mine 1', 'Mine 2', 'Mine 3', 'Mine 4', 'Mine 5', 'Alpha', 'Theta', 'Kappa', and 'Omega'.

Pathfinding skill is taught for 2,500 at (25,26) in Vertigo. The skeleton at (5,11) on level Mine 3 gives Danger sense, and another one at (5,8) on level Mine 4 teachs Direction Sense. The Merchant skill costs 5,000 gold for each party member at D2 (14,2), but they will recoup the cost in short order.

An added edge can be gained in combat by visiting some nearby wells, fountains and shrines after 5:00 am, before entering the mines. F3 (12,12) increases armor class by 5, F3 (7,7) adds 25 hit points, and both are very close to Vertigo. Cleaning out the mines will net the player a good stake of gold, and the barrels with colored liquid will permanently increase statistics.

Specifically, red liquid adds +2 to might, white is +2 luck, green adds +2 to endurance, yellow grants +2 accuracy, purple is +2 speed, blue increases personality by 2, and the orange liquid gives +2 intelligence.

Rivercity

As soon as the player feels comfortable, he should travel to Rivercity by speaking 'Rivercity' to the Vertigo mirror portal. The rogues in the main part of town aren't too tough, and many skills can be purchased here. For 100 gold the characters can learn Swimming, for 300 they can become an Armsmaster.

All the party members should buy Body Building for 1000 gold apiece as soon as possible. In addition, use the barrels in the Dwarf mines to increase endurance, personality and intelligence before training beyond level 3 in order to gain the best increases in hit points and spell points.

Here are some other quests to get the party some quick experience...

- Rescue Celia from the hut in Zombie forest at D4 (15,15) and return to F3 (4,5) for 5,000 experience and 2,000 gold.
- Set Ligono's spirit free at D3 (12,8) by returning his skull at D4 (2,1) and Ligono gives each character 40,000 experience and the Recharge Item spell.
- Defeat the thieves in the southeast section of Rivercity and claim the Tiara.
- Return it to Princess Roxanne in Castle Burlock (3,2,11) for 200,000 experience points.
- Retrieve Barok's pendant from the sorceresses in Rivercity (1,20) and return it to him at (25,20) for 80,000 experience and the Enchant Item spell. Bring the Wand of Faery Magic at D4 (8,14) to Danulf the Faery King to recieve 45,000 experience and 25,000 gold.
- Find the Holy Book of Elvenkind at B4 (14,13) and give it to Tito the Elf Priest for 60,000 experience and 25,000 gold.

These are just a few of the many quests to be found in the game, I advise the player to check every square of every sector. A couple of things that will help greatly in combat are casting Day of Protection or Heroism. If a level 10 cleric casts these the bonuses will be +10. Donating to a temple ten times on Tensday will have the same effect. Good luck, I'll see you again on the Darkside! ❑

Greg Ellsworth

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Sound support: Sound Blaster Pro, Adlib Gold

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R RATED R (This program is voluntarily rated due to the partially violent and adult nature of the graphic imagery.) This program is intended for mature audiences only!!! No sales to minor under 18 and where prohibited by law.

BOND WAS HOT STUFF.
SO WAS ARNOLD.
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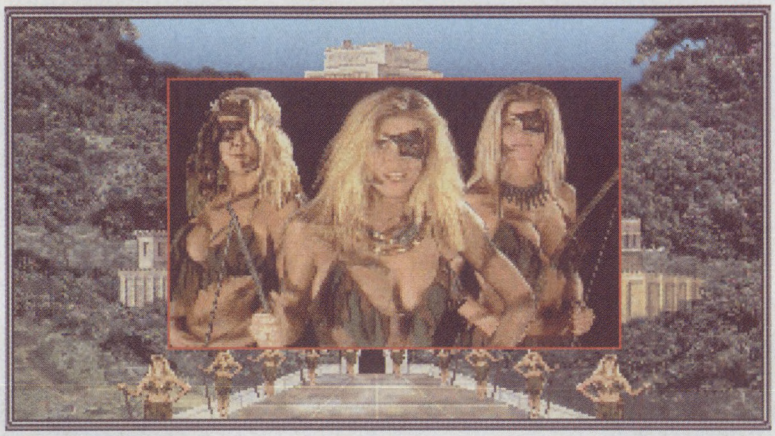
MEGATECH

AMAZON

Guardians of Eden

By Steven Wartofsky



Massive endeavour has clearly gone into the development of Access' latest adventure, **Amazon: Guardians of Eden**. The game works on all levels, from story to characterization to imitation of '30s and '40s-style weekly film serials to graphics and sound multimedia extravaganza. Add to that delightfully bug-free play, extensive and tough series of puzzles, and the results are a real treat.

Though radically different in orientation from Legend Entertainment's games, **Amazon** has much of the same quality of high polish, attention to game design detail, and intelligent narrative characteristic of that company's products. And though as iconic, visually and aurally stunning and cinematically sophisticated as any of Sierra's latest releases, **Amazon** goes one step further and provides enough challenge and gameplay to insure that it's a game with long, long legs.

Amazing trace

The gist of the story is the following: it's the 1950s, and Jason, younger of two brothers, must (at least initially) head into the jungles of the Amazon in pursuit of his older brother, Allen, whose research expedition has suddenly broken contact with the outside world. This situation embeds itself in a larger story which includes rediscovery of some important archaeological evidence of the consequences of Cortez' expedition to the Americas. That story in turn is embedded in a tale of the Guardians of Eden, whose relation to the world created by men is... well I'd rather not give that all away. These narrative layers are overlaid by elements of Saturday afternoon serial adventure films, which take such forms as killer robots, radioactive vegetation, fifties-style pseudo-scientific experiments and efforts to contact aliens, racist depictions of South Americans as gangsters and corrupt government officials and Indians as gullible primitives, many of which are brought up to date and parodied by discoveries further along the line in the game.

It should be noted outright that the writers of **Amazon** have a clear sense of their own distance from the cultural stereotypes represented in the serial movies, which they offer up more as reflection on the attitudinal realities of early pop American culture than as evidence of short-sightedness and parochialism on their own part.

In other words, moments occur throughout the game where the player is made aware of character and cultural representations as stereotype; and events occur which serve to either undermine or parody those stereotypes as the story unfolds.

Serial Killer

This aspect of the narrative regularly upsets first impressions of what the game seems to be hawking, and is a lesson itself in the consequences of making judgments before all the facts are in. **Amazon** plays out a number of the cinematic and filmic conventions of the serials as well; the designers have a sophisticated sense of the language of film, and make use of it to organize the framing and timing of shots so that the pacing of events and gameplay has much of the feel of the serials, in terms of the alternation of moments of intensity and crisis with moments of escape and narrative slowdown. The player's alternating distance from or intimacy with a scene, or a character, or a dialogue exchange, is meaningful in relation to the story as well, instead of being the more arbitrary and unconscious replication of cliches imported wholesale and arbitrarily from the movies usually the case with adventure game design.

Down river

Excellent use is made of close-ups, medium and long-distance shots, panning shots, to contribute to the structuring of the story. The kind of cinematic excitement that other games companies have is finally very much present in an adventure game, and this alone is worth singling **Amazon** out for praise.

The technical mastery of visual aspects of the design, such as real full-motion video (the animation of Jason rowing the canoe down-river is a real must-see), careful and effective coordination of snippets of digitized actor animation with digitized sampled dialogue (the first time I've seen this work in a way that doesn't seem ludicrous), and most distinctly, the use of SVGA graphics not only to provide almost photographic realism but to increase the amount of information presentable on-screen simultaneously, all contribute mightily to the effectiveness of **Amazon.**

Any one of the range of visual and aural effects present in the design could

Story by
Chris and Kevin Jones

Programming by
Bruce Ward

Produced by
Chris Jones

Published by
Access Software

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
SVGA, VGA

Supports
Mouse, Keyboard
Adlib, Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro (incl. OPL3 version), Pro Audio Spectrum 16, Roland MT-32, PC Speaker (with RealSound)

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Reader Service No. 10

serve as a real showcase, but the most incredible thing about the game is that this technology doesn't throw itself in the player's face and say 'worship my brilliance' but always functions efficiently to contribute to the experience of play. There's little technology for technology's sake in **Amazon**, another real breakthrough.

Despite all of that, there are some things in the design worth being a little annoyed over. The puzzles are often tough, especially the ones which take place under a time constraint (and there are many of the latter).

Cardinal sin

While no sequence really functions quite like an arcade game, there are a number of instances where the player's failure to complete the sequence occurs because the narrow route across the pixels laid out by the designers hasn't been clicked across carefully. The walking character can only move in four cardinal directions (I would suggest eight for the next game, there goes another three hundred thousand dollars, eh?), which adds to the feeling of restrictiveness at this level.

Clunk – click

Playing through one of these sequences requires a number of tries, and a good amount of just plain visual memory ('click two pixels north when you get past the root of the tree,' etc.). The ability to alternate between the SVGA and VGA graphics modes during play helps a bit, as hard-to-see areas in SVGA mode sometimes become more apparent in clunkier-looking VGA mode (kind of a built-in zoom lens for the player).

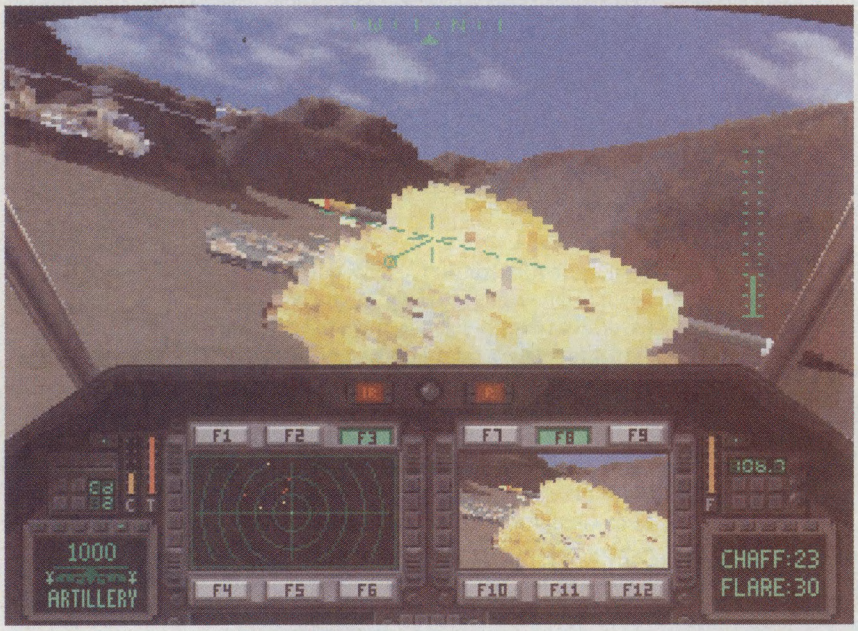
There are some what now seem to be the obligatory semi-arcade sequences; in **Amazon** the player paddles down a punishingly tricky Amazon River not once, but three times over the course of the game. This portion of the game is worthy of much dread, especially as in this case, as in some others, one might find out that some portion of the earlier part of the game needs to be replayed to retrieve a necessary item for later on, and thus have to play at least one of the three canoe sequences all over again. The trickiness in the canoe sequences has mainly to do with timing and number of keypresses rather than reflexes to navigate the canoe, a kind of design old **Dragon's Lair** fans will be familiar with. If such kinds of puzzles dismay, then definitely watch out.

Shock, Horror

Finally, there's the all-pervasive Shock Warning! death screen. The player 'dies' a lot in **Amazon.** Prior to each 'death', the Shock Warning! screen appears, accompanied by a sound which is a cross between the most irritating car alarm ever designed, and the sound Alfred Hitchcock used to good effect in *Psycho*. It might be Norman Bates' favorite music, but it ain't mine.

Amazon is an incredible experience, despite its toughness and minor irritations. It provides extensive play and is a ground-breaking advance in adventure game design. Even the actors sound and look right, which is more than can be said for many movies these days. ❑

Comanche: Maximum Overkill



War is dead. Steven Wartofsky reviews its replacement

Effective simulation of helicopter flight performance has until now never been fully achieved at the PC level. As good as **Gunship** and **Gunship 2000** are (especially at the strategic level), they suffer from limits in the feel of the actual flight performance.

Not so with Novalogic's latest, **Comanche: Maximum Overkill**. It's hard to imagine anything short of a full virtual reality system improving on the feel of this thing! The graphics, the sound effects, the digitized voice and explosions, the detailed simulation of unique three-dimensional terrain for each mission, all combine to provide an utterly unique and absorbing simulation experience.

Solid as a block

Gone are the solid-fill abstractions. Gone is the flat terrain with a few solid-fill objects to provide some sense of three-dimensionality. In their place is a technology Novalogic have trademarked as 'Voxel Space,' something which puts even the bit-mapped imagery in Origin's **Wing Commander** series to shame. Imagine an entire simulation as graphically realistic and smooth as the landing sequences in the latter and some idea of what the territory in `**Comanche**' looks like will come to mind.

The terrain simply is three-dimensional, to the point where flying one of the missions, centered on Mt Kilauea in Hawaii, is so true to life that the features of the area will be instantly recognizable to anyone who's seen that landscape

What this does is provide a sensation of flying unequalled by anything previously released. Since the helicopter is never more than a few hundred feet from the ground, the feeling of passing quickly over detailed terrain, swooping through valleys between mountains or down river-beds, is breathtaking.

Once fine control of the cyclic and collective is mastered (we'll get to that in a moment), it becomes possible to climb slowly out of a valley just enough to identify a target and fire off a missile, and then drop down and flee before enemy radar lock occurs.

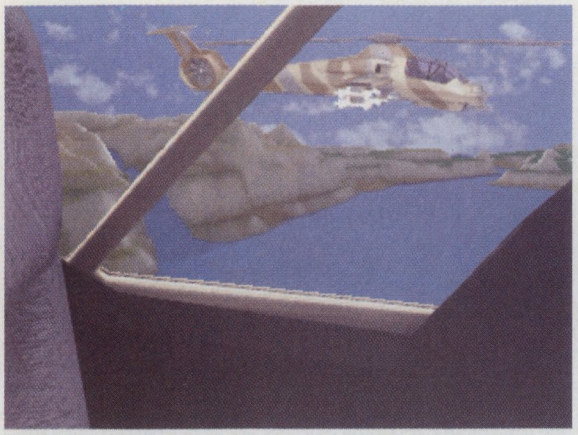
Concealed choppers

Games of hide-and-seek with the Kamov-50 Werewolf helicopters (the primary air opponents in the simulation) are frequent and nerve-wracking. The terrain means that a chopper could be hiding at any point around the next bend, or that it could disappear behind a hill after being sighted and break missile lock.The hunt between predator and prey goes two ways in **Comanche**, and the terrain makes it about as vivid as it can get.

The topography presented for each mission (and it varies widely, from the extremes of a place like Kilauea to the milder hills and valleys of the uplands of Peru, to the narrow river-beds and oxbow lakes and buttes of high desert country) is complemented by detailed animation of enemy forces. Ground forces such as tanks and SAM platforms not only swing around to target the player, but move actively in response to the player's choices. If a unit is targeted but a hit isn't achieved, it will start to roll off as quickly as possible and look for good cover. The same is true of the enemy helicopters. The graphics representing each unit is as impressive as that used to represent the terrain. And even better, the artificial intelligence used to run the opponent units is dynamic enough to give the player a sense of being in a really live environment.

Missiles from hell

The simulation is organized around two 'campaign' sequences; one a set of ten training missions to acquaint



the player with the various systems and techniques available in **Comanche**, the other a collection of full-fledged missions involving a substantial leap in difficulty and not a few surprises.

In the training missions, the player comes to terms with the specifics of how to best use Hellfire missiles, Rockets, the AH-66 Comanche's Cannon, and air-to-air Stingers by taking on a mission specializing in the targets relevant to each weapons system.

Along with the on-board weapons systems, the simulation also provides options to call in artillery fire or, in some missions, the assistance of a chopper wingman. In each case, the player selects Artillery or Wingman instead of any of the onboard systems and chooses targets for fire. The chopper shakes with each artillery hit when at all proximate to the subsequent blast. Effective combined use of on-board weapons, wingman and artillery is where the skill of running **Comanche** all comes into play.

After experience with the training missions has left the player confident not only with the various weapons systems but with the kinds of flight and fire techniques necessary for different kinds of combat situations, moving on to the campaign is advised. Here the going gets really tough, and all anxiety over the possibility that the missions will be too easy (fired-on targets are demolished with almost 100% success after one shot in the training missions) is put to rest. Enjoy the leisure of the training missions for a while, that leisure will soon become a fond memory.

View to a kill

Comanche comes with the usual range of inside and outside views, selectable by function keys from the keyboard. The inside views can also be selected with the 'hat' at the top of the Thrustmaster Flight Control System (FCS). Most players will want to stay in the cockpit at first, until comfortable with all systems. With the Thrustmaster Weapons Control System (WCS) attached, different buttons can be used to select different weapons, thus freeing the hands from ever having to touch the keyboard during a mission and providing maximum control realism.

A digitized voice announces systems damage, target select and destroy, and another voice verifies wingman actions and artillery fire. The voice response is almost like another set of instrument displays, and proves quite important in effective management of the AH-66. A Sound Blaster or 100% equivalent is almost indispensable.

Coming to perhaps one of the most significant aspects of **Comanche**, it should be emphasized that the joystick control of the simulation is absolutely non-pareil. Whether using a CH Flightstick with throttle control wheel, dual joysticks, or Thrustmaster FCS and WCS with Rudder Pedals, the sheer feel of the helicopter's performance is incredible. Inertial effects in response to changes in cyclic and collective are quite realistic (ie the helicopter doesn't instantly speed up or slow down, climb or dive in response to input), and transitional lift is modelled very effectively.

Soft landing

For the first time in an air combat simulation, the player can flit and drop and surge forward and turn on a dime, ie fly in ways that are unique to helicopter performance. It's a radically different way of flying, and the ultimate sensation is, well, indescribable

All of this is not to say that **Comanche** is impossibly difficult. While there are no choices in flight models, the simulation is designed around a futuristic helicopter which automates much of the trickiness real helicopter pilots currently have to deal with. Comanche is essentially a 'fly-by-wire' system, and thus, for instance, doesn't crash when the collective is bottomed, but settles down to the ground for a temporary landing. Emphasis in is not so much on the trouble it might take to fly a helicopter, as much as on the joy of flitting and dashing in a combat-intensive environment. The trick in **Comanche** is thus not to keep the chopper flying, but to keep it in one piece.

Strip club

Some people might find the fact that each mission's terrain is a kind of 'Moebius Strip' frustrating (ie flying far enough in any direction puts one back at the opposite edge of what seems at most to be a 5 mile by 5 mile map). There's ample terrain opportunity for each mission, and the terrain varies widely from mission to mission, but less of a sense of flying over extended, wide-open spaces is present than could be. Not a real problem once the missiles start flying, but a noticeable constraint. Only twenty missions are which isn't really enough. Fortunately, a mission disk is planned for release early in January 1993 and more are planned for after that.

Comanche: Maximum Overkill is yet another leap in air combat simulation design. Keep this up guys and we'll have to give up funding the real thing... it won't be necessary any more, as all future wars could then easily take place entirely in cyberspace. An odd dream, but then again last week I didn't think something like **Comanche** would be possible even on an IBM 486.❑

Designed by
Kyle Freeman
John Garcia

Published by
Novalogic, Inc.

Systems
PC

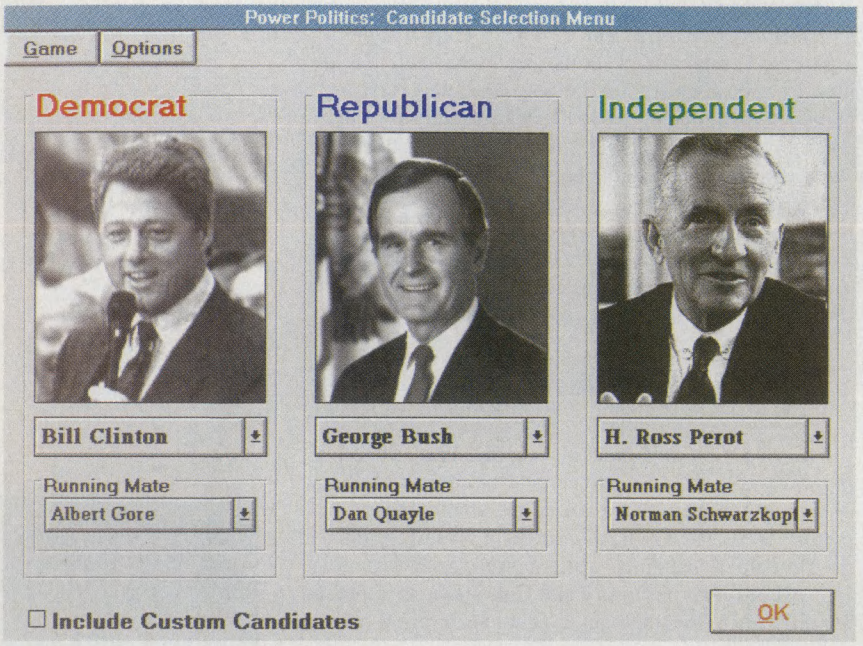
Graphics
256-color VGA only

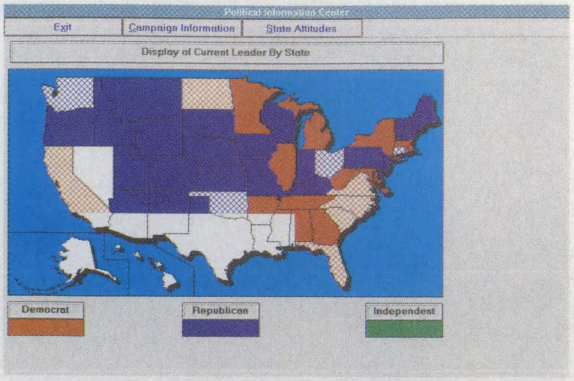
Sound
Roland sound board for music and Sound Blaster for digitized speech and sound effects; Sound Blaster, AdLib;

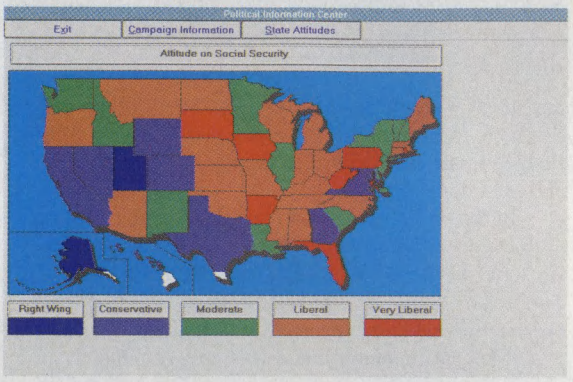
Supports
Thrustmaster Weapons Control System, Flight Control System, Rudder Pedals; CH Flightstick with Throttle Wheel; dual joysticks, mouse, keyboard

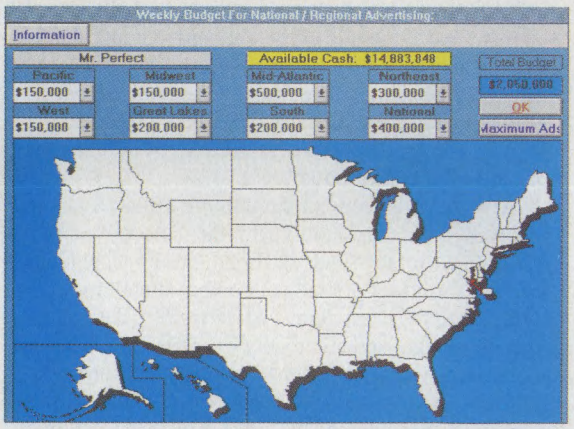
Notes
386/20 Mhz recommended, 486 and a fast graphic card preferred; requires minimum 4MB XMS RAM (8 MB recommended); 12 MB free on HD required for installation; graphics details can be adjusted for slower systems (a 486/25MHz and above can run with full detail on).

Power Politics









Brian Walker hits the campaign trail with a new game from Cineplay

Designed by
Randy Chase

Published by
Cineplay

Systems
PC's running Windows 3.0 or higher

Graphics
SVGA and VGA

Supports
Mouse

Players
1-3

Despite offering what would seem to be myriad of possibilities for a games designer, election games for the computer have been few and far between. In fact there has only been one: **President Elect** from SSI. Although this is regarded as a masterpiece by some I felt that the simulation element overrode the game, forcing the player into sticking in the middle of the political road if the White House was to be reached.

But now comes the impressive sounding **Power Politics** from Cineplay, curiously enough a Windows game. Campaign '92 is the theme here, with Bush, Clinton, Perot, plus their running mates, all on the stump. The program also includes an excellent selection of historical candidates from yesteryear so that a series of 'what if' elections can be replayed. The character parameters on these relics are fixed, but there is a 'customize candidate' facility' whereby players may create their own candidate via use of slide bars.

The state you're in

The game is played in series of turns, with each turn representing one day. At the end of a week the candidate must plan his travel schedule for each day. This is one of the most vital aspects of the game as ensuring that key states are visited often enough can mean the difference between sitting in the White House and complete obscurity.

Once the itinerary has been set the player must decide which cities in his chosen state to visit, the ones with the highest population being the obvious choice. The candidate then has four options to decide what to do when he arrives: hold a press conference, campaign on a specific issue, fund raise, or rest.

In a spin

Fund rasing is essential as cash is needed to keep the ad campaign ticking over. The value of press conferences is hard to gauge and the manual provides no clues. Occasional rests should be taken in some of the smaller states to prevent fatigue which in turn will affect campaigning. When campaigning, a full range of issues to harp on about is provided. To aid selection, various menus are available detailing the state's position on everything from abortion to the environment. The trick here is to campaign on an issue where one's own view is in line with that of the local populace, thus employing the politically

expedient tactic of 'being all things to all men'.

The options comprise everything one would see in a real election: dirty tricks, advertising, spin doctors, and more charts than the Cleveland Philarmonic. There is even a debate option but this is totally computer controlled, leaving the player something of a spectator. Unfortunately this is true of the game in general. Although there are decisions to be made, the ramifications of these are vague. Much of the blame for this can be attributed to the manual. A slender tome that has 'rushed' stamped all over it. It describes what various things do, but the effect is left to the imagination.

Sole candidate

In the first of two game played for the purposes of this review, candidate Big Ed Walker from the state of Vermont ran as an independent with an extreme left wing agenda. The tone of the campaign was positive throughout as Big Ed stressed the threaputic value of his policies. The crowds cheered, the spin doctors were impressed, and everyone agreed that he was extremely unlucky to win only four states; Vermont, New Mexico, Nevada (socialised gambling!), and New York whose denizens displayed the wisdom for which they are famed.

The second game featured Jesse Heinous from good 'ol Georgia running on a fascist platform. Jesse tried every dirty trick in the book and lost no opportunity to decry his opponents. The voters were unimpressed, except those in the states of Oklahoma and Nevada (who seem to suffer from political schizophrenia), as Jesse slumped to a humiliating defeat. Bill Clinton came out a clear winner in both of these contests.

Although I had a lot of fun on the campaign trail, I still felt **Power Politics** shared many of the flaws of **President Elect** in that there is little play balance. An outsider running on an independent ticket has no chance. (A tip here for those ploughing this lone furrow: be sure to set the fund raising ability to exceptional, cash, and the skill to raise it, is essential in this game). Viewed as a simulation, **Power Politics** is fascinating. As a game it falls rather flat. The best example of this is in the 'customize candidate' option. When creating a candidate, there is nothing to stop one pushing the slide bars to the 'exceptional' level in all categories. A stronger game design would have allotted a points pools, rather like in the Koei games, from which attributes must be 'bought'. Although up to three human players can participate in the game, I would not recommend more than two, unless the third does not mind being cast in the role of perennial loser.

One the positive side, there is an impressive level of detail and the excellent resolution that Windows provides. In summary, **Power Politics** is what it is. And what it is, is the best election simulation on the market. The fact that it is *only* simulation on the market should not be allowed to detract from this judgement too much.❑

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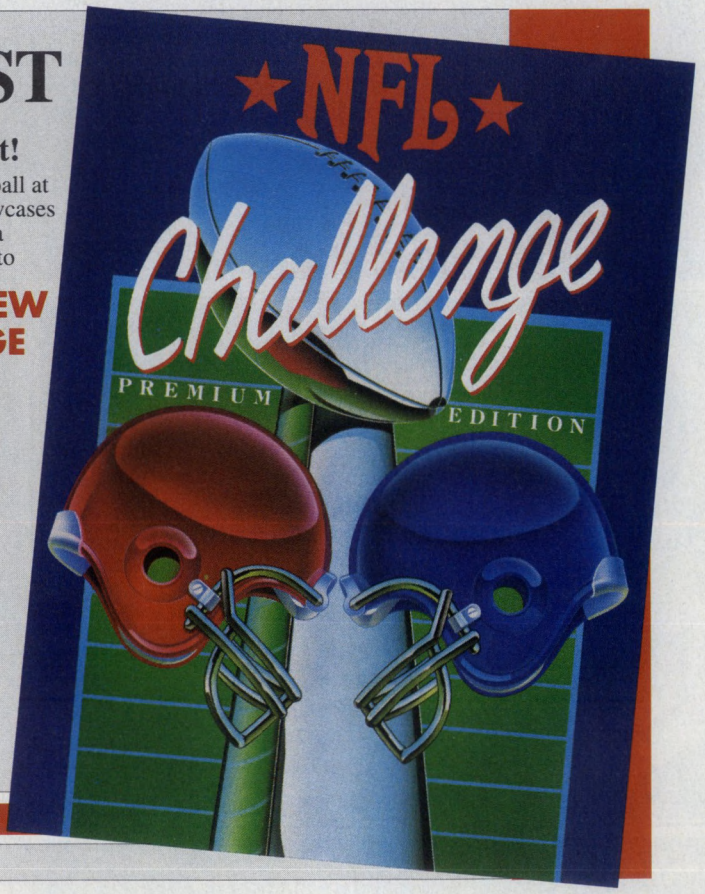

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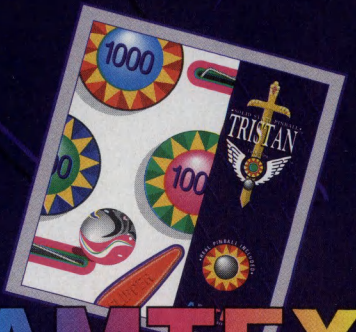

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EIGHT BIT REMIX

John Harrington scratches the surface

Is it my imagination or are the pop charts full of nothing but remixes of records my granny used to dance to? And am I delirious, or is Hollywood shunting out a relentless series of sequels to films which weren't worth watching in the first place? I know everybody is supposed to be ecology conscious now but isn't this taking the notion of recycling a little too far?

As regards the software industry, the tendency has been to follow the example of Hollywood and issue sequels rather than follow the music biz's propensity to rework old classics. Any day now I am expecting Maxis to announce the release of Sim Sim, a game in which the player can control a software house which adapts one fabulous idea very successfully to several different subjects.

Of course, it is not unheard of for eight-bit classics to be updated and unleashed upon a new generation of games players. The last few issues of this magazine have featured a preview of an update to **Empire**, a review of the 16-bit version of **Carriers of War** and reports of a 1993 release of **Seven Cities of Gold**. As the sequels gradually run out of mileage and the reservoir of new ideas for games becomes depleted until the next giant leap forward in technology, it is perhaps inevitable that the leisure software industry will cannibalise old games.

Back to mono

Is this necessarily a bad thing? There were some great games produced back in the eight-bit era, games which were grandiose in scope despite the limitations of working with only 64k of RAM. Surely these games would benefit from being updated to take advantage of all this gee-whiz technology we take for granted now?

If it is genuinely true that the PC now sitting on my desktop has the equivalent processing power of an early 1980's mid-range mainframe, what a mouth-watering prospect it is to think of the likes of **Rails West!** being available on a machine where disk accesses are not required every 45 seconds. To extend the pop music analogy, think what a wall of sound Phil Spector could have erected in a 64-track studio as opposed to a pokey old 8-track.

But hang on a minute. Didn't Phil Spector resist the move to stereo? And doesn't Robert Johnson somehow sound incongruous on a compact disc? More to the point, aren't most of the remixes of classic songs merely an exercise in demonstrating the mastery of technology over talent?

There is a danger in taking a game which was designed in an environment where machine resources were extremely tight, and transplanting it to an environment

where the machine can accommodate any form of excess the designer cares to indulge in. An eight-bit wargame, in which most of the fun is in solving the logistical problems of deploying units and keeping them supplied, is not going to play as well in its upgraded format if one of the 'improvements' is to have the software handle all the logistical problems for the player.

The key to designing good strategy games is to provide the opportunity to make decisions at regular intervals as well as offering entertaining or stimulating ways of monitoring the success of those decisions. Too many games designers these days seem to design games which play themselves.

River deep, mountain high

Choosing the right game to update is half the problem. Maintaining the intrinsic appeal of the original is the other half. For this reason I await the new version of Dan Bunten's classic **The Seven Cities of Gold** with trepidation. This was a game ahead of its time; eight years ahead of its time to be precise. If only Dan he had waited until 1992 for the 500th anniversary of Columbus's historic voyage he could have cleaned up on the merchandising.

Part adventure, part resource management game, what was revolutionary about '**Seven Cities**' was its world generation program. Although players could choose to play a historical map and explore the Americas, far more fun was to be had venturing into the unknown on a computer-generated map.

In the game, the player assumes the role of a Portuguese naval explorer given a commission by the crown to slope off to the Orient and indulge in some profitable trading. That's the good news. The bad news is that Japan is ten thousand miles away and no 15th-century expedition could possibly carry enough provisions to survive the journey, unless, of course, the expedition were to discover a new land mass along the way .... a land mass such as the one containing the fabled Seven Kingdoms, each said to be rich in treasure.

The first decision the player has to make is outfitting his ship. How many men to take, how much food, and how many tradeable goods to carry. Get the food to men ratio wrong and after a few weeks at sea the crew will be dining on each other - and I am not referring to the absence of dining room furniture.

The number of goods transported for barter has an effect on the player's strategy in the latter part of the game; the natives can be won over through bribery ('Okay, then, that's a deal. I give you this bead necklace and an old Pat Boone album and you give me Manhattan') but they have a large appetite for trinkets and it is usually quicker to take lands through brute force.

However, the natives have long memories and are in possession of a bush telegraph system superior in effiency to anything Ma Bell ever installed, so if the player starts off on a course of genocide he had better be prepared to carry it through to the very bitter end. He also has to live with his conscience and try to get to sleep at nights.

It's my party

The game interface of the eight-bit original was a curious one, in that the movement of the expedition was viewed through a 'keyhole' in the centre of the screen. This certainly simulated venturing into the unknown but it was not an aesthetically pleasing visual experience. If players wished to review the lands thus far explored they had to exit to a separate screen.

Hopefully the new version will be in Cinemascope rather than Keyhole-Vision, with the amount of terrain detail displayed on the map dependent on how thoroughly the party explores each area. Such a method would still enable the party to pass within three miles of a native settlement and be oblivious to its existence, as happens so often in the eight bit version.

Another improvement which the 16-bit version could incorporate is an online captain's log. It's very important to keep track of which cities have been explored or plundered, which tribes have been befriended and which tribes have been attacked. It's also wise to keep notes on the inter-relationships of the tribes; just because they are all 'foreigners' does not mean they are all on the same side. Think Yugoslavia. Having such information to hand assists the player in developing a successful long term strategy for success.

Without a doubt one of the most surprisingly successful computer games of the eighties was **Tetris**. It is well known in board gaming circles that abstract games have all the consumer appeal of a pair of gloves previously owned by a leper, and by and large the same rule applies to the leisure software business. Yet somehow **Tetris**, with its building blocks tumbling from the sky theme, struck a chord with hardcore and coffee-break gamers alike.

Perhaps it's all a result of our parents buying us shape-sorters when we were kids and forcing us to put round pegs in round holes.

Flight 52 where are you?

Whilst I have spent dozens of hours playing **Tetris**, I am enough of a hardcore gamer to feel guilty about it, as if playing an abstract game is a futile act. For this reason I prefer to play **Kennedy Approach** which in many ways is like a souped-up 3D version of **Tetris** masquerading as an air traffic controller simulation.

Released in 1985, **Kennedy Approach** is one of the great stress-inducing games of all-time, which I suppose is something of a back-handed recommendation. Five different airports are offered in the game, ranging from the featureless Atlanta (the easiest) to the frenetic JFK airport (the hardest). Difficulty levels are set by choosing which shift to work; the graveyard shift is the quietest whilst the early morning session is like directing traffic in Beirut during a mortar attack.

Points are scored for every plane which leaves or arrives on schedule. Penalty points are incurred for sending planes to the wrong destination (you would think the pilot on the 8.15 to Montreal would complain about being sent to Boston, but he doesn't); for long delays in landing or taking off; and for violating another aircraft's airspace in contravention of safety regulations. Depending on how well the player does, he is next offered a harder shift at the same airport or a similar shift at a more challenging airport. Air traffic controllers who stack Boeings into the side of the Rocky Mountains tend not to get any job offers at all.

The main game screen consists of a grid of dots, along which airplanes travel in accordance with instructions from air traffic control. The three dimensional aspect of the game is represented by vertical lines beneath each aircraft - each line represents 1,000 feet of altitude. Recommended exit and arrival paths are highlighted on the grid but as planes are not allowed to fly above 5,000 feet the weight of traffic often necessitates that a plane due to exit (say) east to New York has first to head south east and then be instructed to change course later.

Of course, if you can keep track of that plane to New York and remember two minutes later to alter its direction when twenty-five pilots are constantly screaming in your ear for permission to land or take-off then you are in the wrong business; you should be at Washington airport earning $140,000 per annum instead of paying Microprose thirty bucks for the pleasure of risking a coronary.

As with the later stages of **Tetris**, mistakes tend to escalate and require bigger and more adjustments to be made to the subsequent schedule. Successful air traffic control is a lot like juggling in that it is important to maintain a rhythm; once one 'ball in the air' is thrown a few degrees off course all the others start veering off course. It's okay for a juggler to drop a ball or a flaming torch; it's not quite the same thing to land one jumbo jet

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on top of another, although thankfully Kennedy Approach spares us any grisly graphics shots of flaming fuselages.

The graphics throughout the game are very basic, consisting of cigar-shaped blobs travelling along gridlines. The audio element of the game is, by way of compensation, superb. Sampled speech of communications between air traffic control and the pilots crackles out of the speaker and is excellent for confusing the hell out of the neighbours if played at sufficient volume.

(Robert) Maxwell's silver hammer

Most of my trips down memory lane have been to visit old Atari eight-bit games but there was/is a machine known as the Commodore C64. One game I came across in the mid-eighties, called **The Front Page**, was so good I considered buying a C64 just so I could own and play the game.

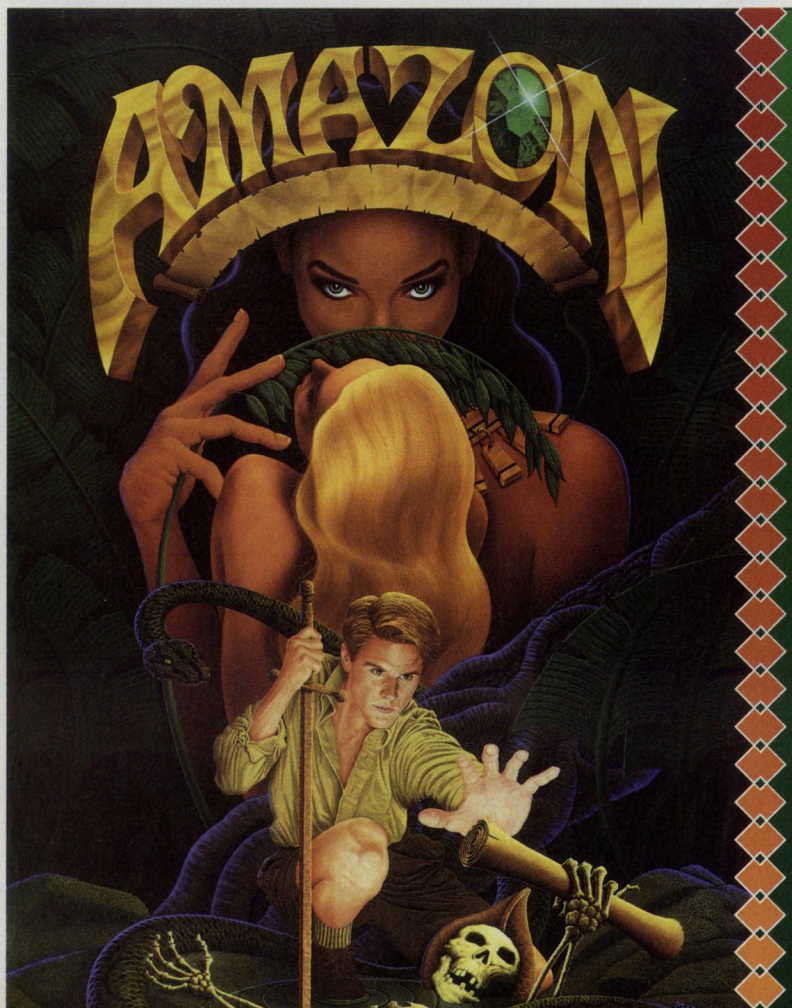
As the name suggests, **The Front Page** is a newspaper game, but rather an offbeat one in that it is set in a fascist banana republic and has no real victory conditions. It's a multi-player game featuring newspapers of various political (or apolitical) hues, so that for the left-wing newspapers the aim could be to incite the masses to rise up against the dictator, whilst the right wing newspapers might view keeping the generalissimo in power as a victory.

The editor of the downmarket tabloid *The Screamer* doesn't care who is in power, so long as she has big tits. Alternatively, all newspapers could pursue the almost unheard of notion of actually trying to run a profitable newspaper.

Newsflash

Each player controls one newspaper of his choice and makes editorial decisions such as how many reporters to employ and how much to pay them. The most important aspect of editing, however, is deciding on the newspaper content. This is done in the weekly news phase in which a succession of newsflashes come over the wire, together with an indication of the number of reporters required to cover the story. Once assigned to a story for that week reporters cannot be reassigned if a juicier story breaks later in the week, so as well as considering whether the story is suitable for the paper's readership it is advisable to keep in mind manpower limitations too.

To give an example, the story 'President's wife is a transvestite' (requiring 9 reporters) would obviously appeal to the downmarket paper *The Screamer*, but as it is also embarrassing to the government it might also be of interest to the left-wing broadsheet *The Watchdog*. However, *The Watchdog* is mainly read by muesli-crunching bearded intellectuals who might be dismayed



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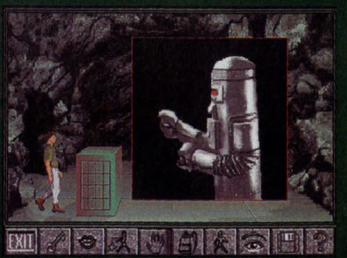

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at such scandal appearing in the newspaper. In any case T*he Watchdog*'s sales are probably so low that it is unlikely the paper would have enough reporters on the staff to spare nine for such a frivolous story.

Clarion call

By gradually altering the usual content of a newspaper it is possible to shift a title into a different sector, perhaps to compete head to head with a rival. This process can be accelerated by pricing wars and attempts to cause industrial unrest at rival newspapers by hoisting wages. If the change in style is carried out too abruptly however, it is likely that both staff and existing readers will desert in droves, at which point there is little option for the editor but to throw himself overboard from his private yacht one morning.

Unusually for a multi-player game, orders are entered at the keyboard in full-view of all the players. This might seem unrealistic, but is in fact a useful feature of the game as it allows editors to respond swiftly to cuts in the cover price of rivals and most importantly to run 'spoiling' stories to prevent rivals from getting an exclusive. For example, the mid-market right-of-centre paper *The Clarion*, might reluctantly run an anti-government story if it prevents the mid-market left-of-centre *The Edition* from stealing market share through an exclusive.

Copious charts and statistics are provided for each newspaper and for the market as a whole, so editors can analyse the readership mix (as defined by socio-economic classes), the circulation trends, the popularity of the President and various financial matters such as the overheads.

Paper hack writer

The newspaper business is such a fabulous subject for a computer game it is hard to believe that there has not been a more recent attempt than The Front Page. I have, in fact, played a beta version of a superb newspaper game which combines the newspaper aspects of **The Front Page** with the stock market shenanigans of **Railroad Tycoon**, but unfortunately it has been written for the Atari ST, which is to the strategy computer game market what Woolworth's is to haute couture retailing.

A PC version would be able to provide a much greater selection of stories (after a while the eight-bit version starts repeating stories which takes the guess-work out of deciding whether the story is suitable or not for one's newspaper), and of course the money-making possibility of expansion disks should not be overlooked. Given the inherent appeal of the subject matter and the chronic shortage of genuinely social multi-player games, **The Front Page** would seem to be a natural for a revamp. I only hope Sid Meier is reading this.❑

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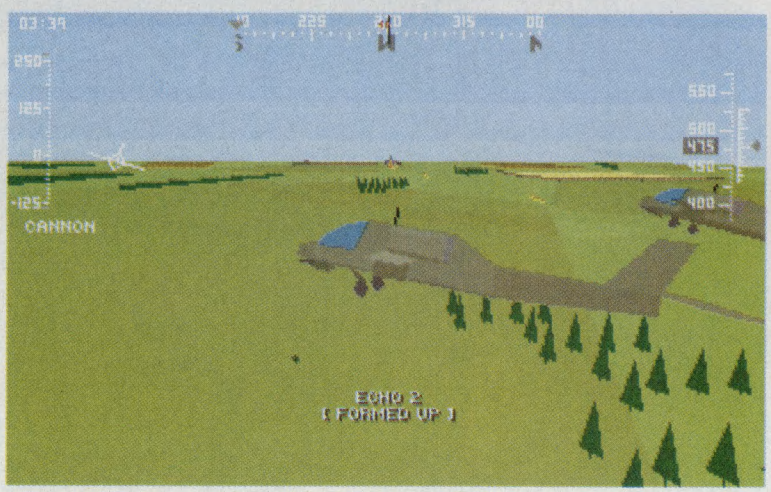
COMMANDER CRUNCH REPORTS FROM THE HANGAR

This month: the commander talks to his computer



Gunship 2000: a chopper with the right feel

Springtime's supposed to be the season when all sorts of new life comes popping onto the scene. Well, at least life of an organic nature. In the world of silicon and iron oxide, however, the season of growth always seems to reach its peak in November. Why could this be? Does it have to do with the preference of the inorganic for cold? A tradition among the rocky for doing their thing without the help of the sun? The name of the month? A real mystery, eh?

Oral appendage

It's happening all over again this year. First off comes a fabulous new appendage for the many-limbed Shiva-like IBM PC. Grown in the laboratories of Island Imaging down in apocalyptic Florida, Voice Commander turns the whole digital speech party around on the user and provides the chance for a little more input into what the computer's up to.

Buy a nice microphone from Radio Shack (the $30 models will do just fine), plug it into the microphone port of the Sound Blaster, and *et voila!* We're one step further on our way to simulating the simulated future. Voice Commander is a software system which makes efficient use of the Sound Blaster's input capacities to allow voice control over certain aspects of flight simulation (and that's only one possibility out of many upcoming).

In this first demonstration of the technology, Voice Commander is designed to work with MPS Labs' **F-117A**. After installation, which includes getting the system to recognize the player's particular voice and pronunciation (pretty simple, just speak into the microphone), Voice Commander essentially takes over eighteen of the keyboard commands used during a flight. The player can for instance change views and targets, raise or lower the landing gear, and go to full throttle, all with a spoken input.

This is a great idea with a few small hitches. Firstly, most simulations these days require two hands kept busy at all times. The microphones most effective with Voice Commander so far are hand-held models. Unless the player like the computer has lots of extra appendages, juggling microphone, keyboard and joystick can prove a bit tricky. If interested, figure

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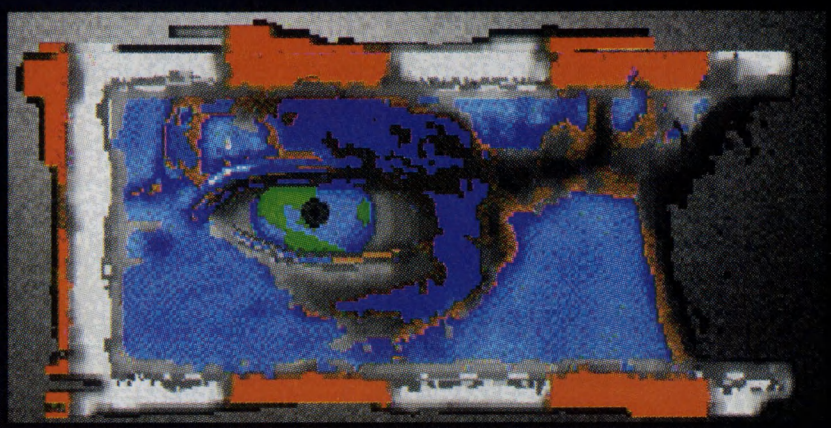

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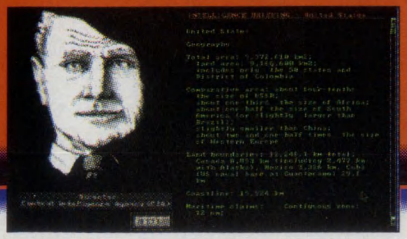

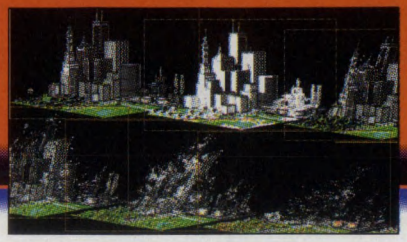

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Reader Service No. 77

out a way to clip the mike to the desk somewhere really close, or to a worn shirt. Even doing that, the ultimate effect is the feeling that we're one step closer to the character Tommy in The Who's classic rock opera. Hopefully the software and hardware combination will be improved at some point so that a cheap, lightweight clip-on mike can become a basic part of the package.

The sound of silence

The other little hitch has more to do with the resulting experience. Unless I'm in a closed room with sound-proofed walls, or in the proximate company of people understanding this obsession, I have to admit feeling a little goofy shouting at my computer, especially since, at least in **F-117A**, it refuses to say anything in response.

I suspect the eeriness of this kind of interaction will dissolve once voice recognition is combined more seamlessly with the kind of speech sampling found in, say, **Falcon 3.0**, since in that simulation the weirdness is the other way around: press a key and the computer makes rude suggestions. Despite these kvetches, though, Voice Commander is a nifty addition in that it brings yet another sense on-line in the world of software simulation (what's next? Smell-O-Vision, of course).

Keyed up

These days it might be expected that this kind of graphics realism would have to be bought at the expense of processing time used for other things like flight equations and the like. Not so. In fact, though I still love **Gunship 2000** I'd have to say that this chopper's the first one I've flown that actually seems to have the right feel to it. The relationship between things like ground effect, collective and cyclic controls, inertia and turn performance feel very helicopter-like, and there's a glossiness in the quality of the joystick control that's quite distinctive and pleasurable.

We're on a short leash this for this months column so just a few more words on a couple of other items. Psygnosis have just released **Air Support** for the Amiga. It's another interesting tactical simulation that's somewhere between **Armour Geddon** and **Battle Isle** in play. It's a little slow on an Amiga 500 but for those that like this style of real-time tactical wargame with simulation elements, **Air Support** improves on the other two titles in terms of sheer playability.

And finally, as if **Wing Commander** and Voice Commander weren't enough, now comes Keyboard Commander, a little paper utility that serves as a great aid to memory when playing eight simulations at a time with all the manuals filed away in a box somewhere. What will they think of next? My guess is Commander in Chief Commander; now that would be a real leap forward. Don't forget: CPU also stands for, 'Closer, Please, User.' Over and out.❑

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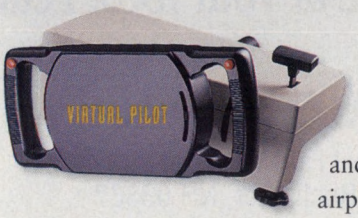

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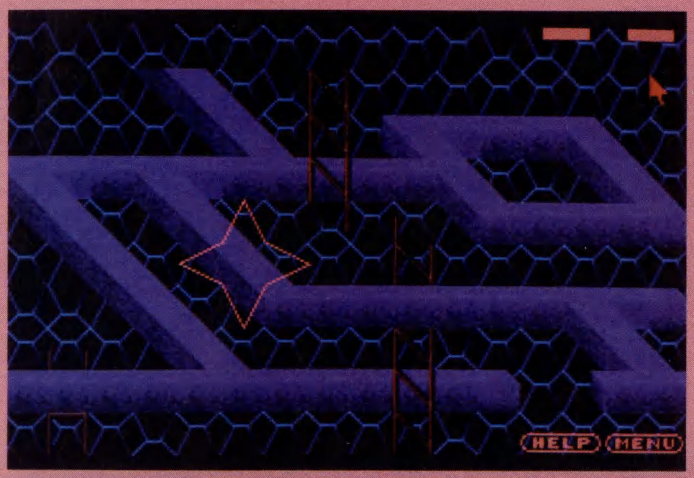

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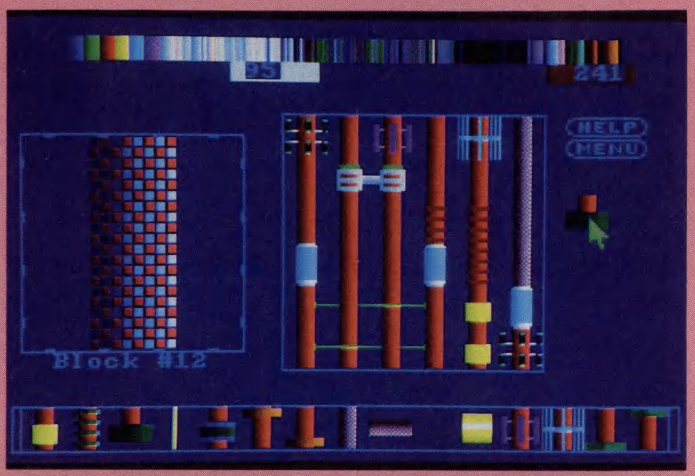

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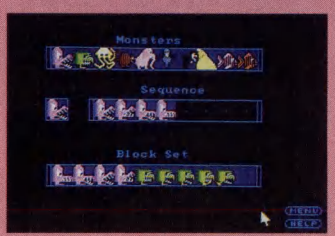

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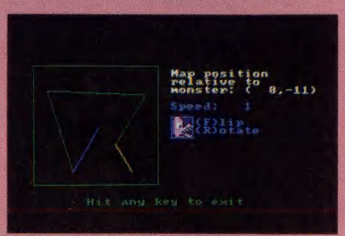

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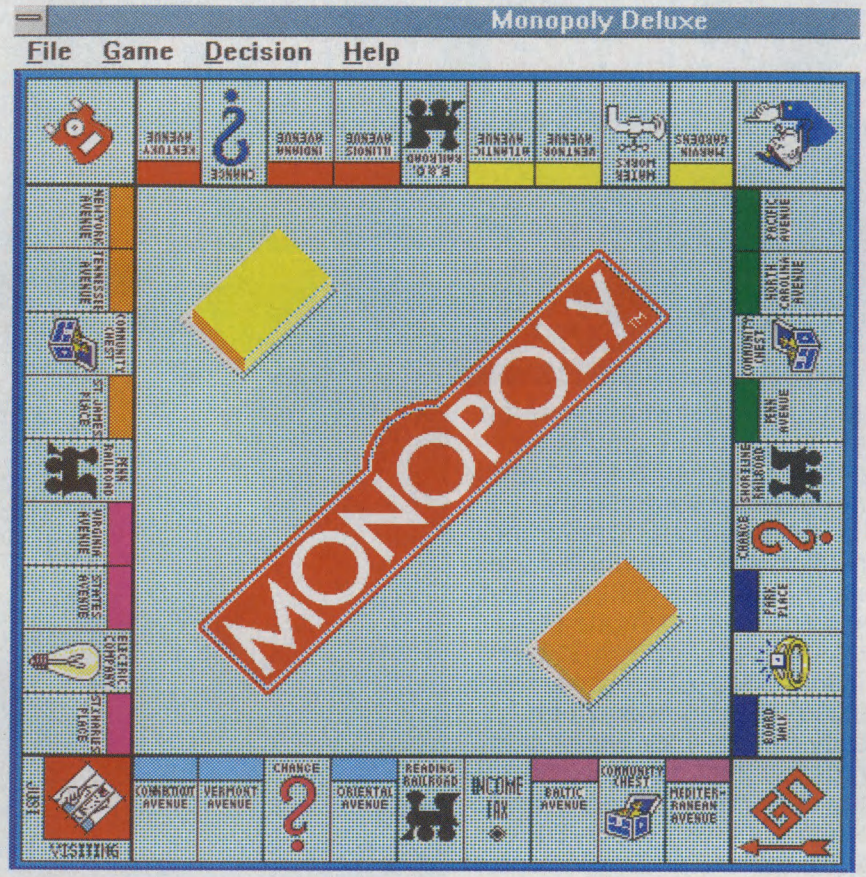

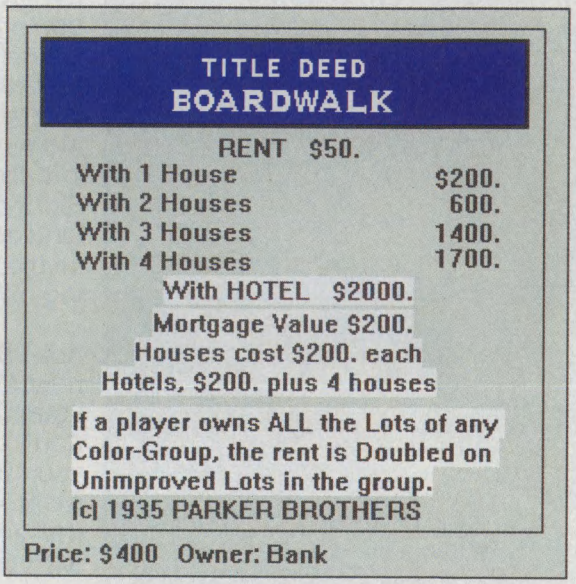
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Monopoly

Like many gamers I suspect, my hobby started at an early age. Four years old to be exact. I can't remember precisely what the first game I ever played was, but **Monopoly** was certainly amongst the contenders. Mostly my early gaming sessioins were restricted to the festive season. In Britain, the rustling of wrapping paper on Christmas morning was invariably followed by the rattling of dice being rolled.

Like most families engaged in a game of **Monopoly** there were the usual shouting matches culminating in one being 'let off' paying some humongous sum for landing on Mayfair ('Broadway' to those growing up on what was then the other side of the pond). No wonder back in those days, many people began to complain the game was 'too long.' If nothing else, the new computer version of this classic game eliminates this problem (as well as the players); asking the machine for an even break in such a situation is like appealing to a speak-your-weight-machine to give a more flattering reading.

Converting **Monopoly** to computer rule for rule would be a waste of an opportunity, especially considering all the variants that have popped up over the years. The team at Virgin Games clearly thought the same way, for just about every variant has been included in the new program as an option. The most spectacular difference, however, between this and the board version, are the animated sequences. The horse whinnies then proceeds to gallop around the board. The car revs up and honks it's horn, while the boot emits a suitable clomping sound. The hat has more of a problem as the aural qualities of this accessory are not immediately apparent. When going to Jail, a meat wagon replete with siren appears in the middle of the board.

Trading is activated by double clicking on the player icons who wish to trade. A list of properties owned by these players is then presented. To propose a trade, just click on the desired property and then click on the icon of the player with whom it is hoped the trade will be completed. The property now appears in that players portfolio. When properties in the deal have been transferred in this manner, a dialog box will pop up asking for confirmation. Players may then confirm or refuse. The computer players are no mugs at wheeling and dealing. Some of them, even when offered the earth, will still refuse. The best tactic is to try them all, even with the same deal.

The variants mentioned earlier include fines paid to 'free parking,' with the player landing there collecting

Monopoly

Designed by
Juan Romero

Published by
Virgin Games

Systems
PC (Windows and DOS)

Graphics
256 color VGA

Supports
Mouse, keyboard, most sound cards

Players
1–6

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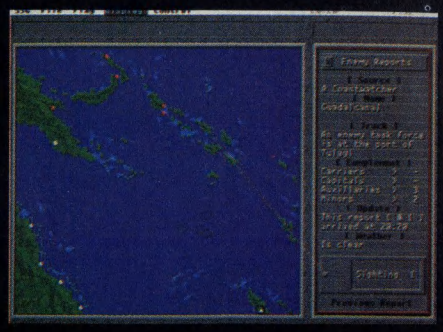

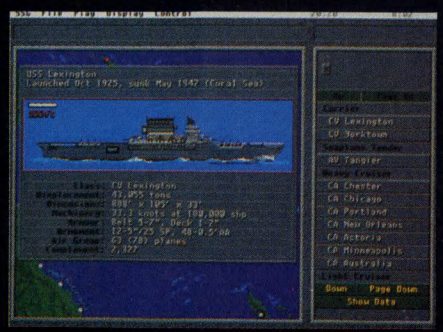

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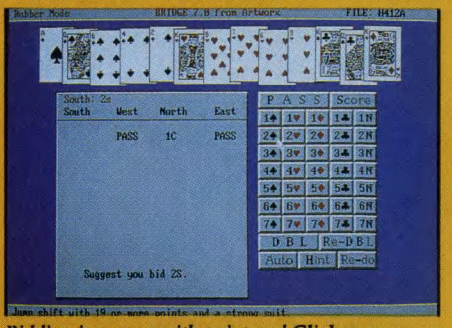
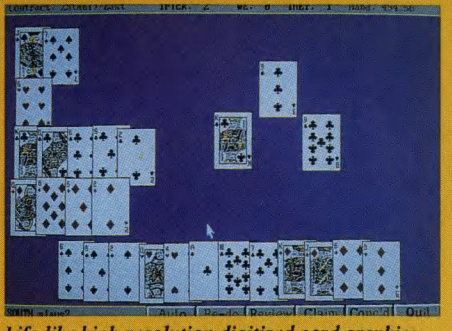
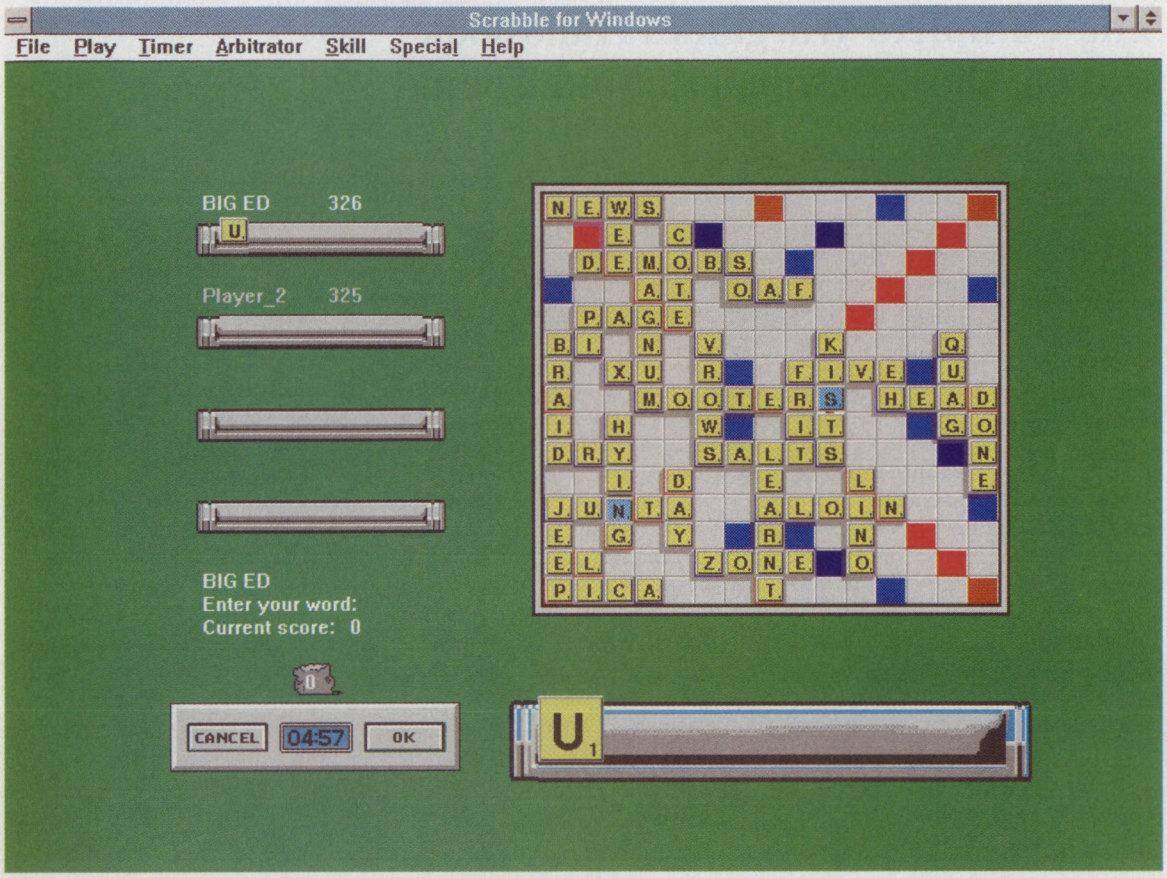


Bidding is a snap with point and Click mouse interface or keyboard input.



Life-like high resolution digitized card graphics add to the realism of the program.

Reader Service No. 61



the available booty. Building may be limited, while several options are available for those suffering jail sentences. The user interface both in the Windows and DOS version is excellent. Die rolls can be automated as can 'rent due' payments. If the latter is switched off then a mouseclick is needed to make the payment. Of course, one can always 'forget,' as in days of yore. **Monopoly** may be considered a bit lightweight now, but it still is the definitive 'track' game. And who doesn't enjoy having those childhood memories rekindled?

Scrabble

Around the time **Monopoly** was being invented by Charles Darrow, Alfred Mosher Butts was busy at work on a word game. This was the depression era, proof, if any were needed, that necessity is the mother of invention. The original title of Butts' game was Crisscross Words. It was not until 1948 that it was renamed **Scrabble.** The rest, as they say, is history. Despite its huge success, Scrabble is a game that induces loathing in many. Certainly it's a far more intense game than **Monopoly,** a fact emphasised by its two player nature (up to four can play, but even semi-serious players would never want more than two in a game).

One would think that a computer version of **Scrabble** would be virtually unbeatable, after all, it has an entire dictionary at its disposal. One would be right. Played on level 9 (the top level) allowing four minutes a move, the machine would see off most players. I was able to give it a good game on level 7, with scores averaging around the 350 mark. On level 9, I seldom got within 50 points of the computer's score. Quite apart from it's extensive 'vocabulary' the computer also displays a tactical adroitness, seldom missing those triple word scores.

The interface is very smooth; just click and drag to transfer a letter from the rack to the board. All the options one would expect, plus some entirely *un*expected ones are present. There is an anagram facility which may be applied to the letters held, and there is also a 'define last word' option. I found myself invoking this fairly constantly as around 70% of the words the computer came up with were new to me.

The on-board dictionary is *The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary,* a tome which British players refuse to recognise, as the manual notes somewhat tersely. Frankly, this doesn't surprise me. Exclamation and abbreviations both get the nod from this strange arbiter of language, where as I was always taught that anything which was unable to stand up without the aid of some form of punctuation, was most certainly not a word. After a few games, however, I soon got into the swing of things, placing 'eh'and 'oh' like I'd been doing it all my life.

The computer version of **Scrabble** is not going to change anyone's mind about the game itself, but for fans of **Scrabble** it must be considered an essential purchase. The only thing I would have liked to see added would be a score history. The positive factors outweigh this oversight, however. There is a ready made opponent, a timer to avoid those inevitable *longeurs,* and an interface that ensures very smooth play. And surely everyone must want to know what an albedo is? ❑

Scrabble

Designed by
Steve Clarke

Published by
Virgin Games

Systems
PC (Windows and DOS)

Graphics
256 color VGA

Supports
Mouse

Players
1–4

The Complete Wargames Handbook How to Play, Design and Find Them

By James F Dunnigan

Published by
William Morrow Co. Inc.
New York

Notes
2nd edition
302 pages
$12

What a difference 10 years makes, as this excellent book from wargames veteran Jim Dunnigan makes abundantly clear. That is the time that has elapsed between the first and second edition of this tome during which, of course, wargaming as we know it has undergone more changes than the Buckingham Palace Guard.

If any author is entitled to use the somewhat conceited sounding 'complete' of the title then it is James F Dunnigan. As the founder of SPI, Jim boy was there at the start of the wargaming equivalent of the goldrush. Unfortunately the brief but colorful history of that company is not covered in great detail here. Quite understandable; the anecdotes from that period could fill a book by themselves.

Quite sensibly, the author begins at the beginning and asks: 'What is a wargame?' He then proceeds to design one (The Drive on Metz) by way of an answer. Black and white maps on the printed page explain the importance of hexagons while the accompanying text runs through the first two turns. If readers do not understand what a wargame is by this time, then they can recline in the knowledge that they have just gained another doorstop.

The early chapters are aimed at the novice looking for an entry point into wargaming. In particular, not just how to play them, but how to *win* them - a sure attention grabber even for experienced players. The aforementioned The Drive on Metz is used as an example both in this and the chapter on Designing a Wargame.

The chapter on The History of Wargames is particularly fascinating and dovetails nicely with a similar article by Ezra Sidhan which was published in this magazine recently. In this, Dunnigan describes his own entry into the world of wargames:

> How I got into the wargames business is one of those odd, series-of-coincidental-events things that often turn out to have far reaching consequences. The emergence of the wargame company that I founded in the late 1960s in effect signals the next major chapter in the history of wargames.
>
> I picked up on wargames in the early 1960s when I was in the army. While I had always been interested in history, I had never been that curious about military history. But while in the army, I came across some GI's who played the original Avalon Hill games,

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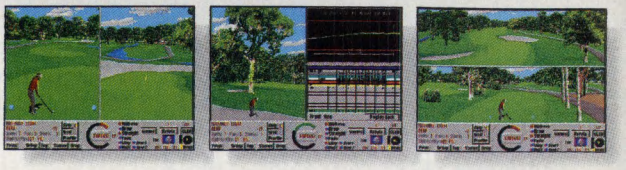

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and as I was in the military, it seemed a logical thing to get involved with wargames. When I got out of the army in 1964, I kept in touch with wargames in a casual way and became obsessed with the idea of using games to teach, and better understand, history. Spending the next six years working my way through Columbia University gave me ample opportunity to do some writing on military history the way I thought it should be done. Note that at this stage I considered games a means of better understanding military history so I could write a better account of it. My goal of writing books took a detour when I got to know Tom Shaw down at Avalon Hill. We got along quite well, and in 1966 he asked me if I would like to design a game. At that point, I had no aspirations to design games professionally, but accepted the challenge anyway. A year later, Avalon Hill published my effort, a game called **Jutland** based on the naval battle of the same name during World War 1. A year later, in 1968, they published by second effort, **1914**, which covered the opening rounds of World War 1.

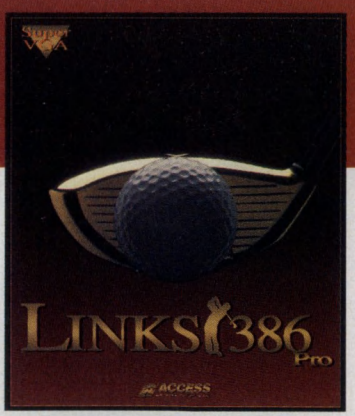
Much of the book focuses on board wargames, both the rise and fall, though computers do get a look in. Dunnigan is commendably objective when seeking to compare the pros and cons of silicon gaming with its cardboard relation. His comments in this area have an inevitably familiar ring to them: the advantage of the 'save game' facility; the difficulty of seeing the whole map. Standard stuff, but still true.

The chapter on computer wargames traces their proliferation to the emergence of the IBM PC, and the clones thereof, in 1981. The rationale for this theory being the mass storage capacity of floppy disks. More contentious is his statement that 'by the mid 1980s many manual (paper) wargames had been transferred to computer'. At this point in time, IBM PC's were limited to a CGA display. What wargames were available were primarily for 8 bit machines such as the Atari 800, and were minuscule in number when compared to their boardgame brothers. He goes on to state that 'wargamers were not comfortable with not knowing exactly what was going on inside the wargame'. A reservation, I can confirm, that did not just apply to wargamers.

Using his 'don't just write about it, do it' philosophy, Dunnigan rounds off this chapter with a blow-by-blow account of designing his own multi user computer wargame, **Hundred Years War**, which should now be up and running on the GENie network. Quite aside from the main text, the book is worth having for the Appendices alone. Here we find the author's own (game) bibliography, gaming aids, paper wargames publishers, computer wargame publishers, computer wargames published 1979-1991 and last but not least, a section on magazines which cover computer wargames in which one such publication is described thus: 'Done in a uniquely British style'. Who *can* he mean?

Brian Walker

by the game itself.



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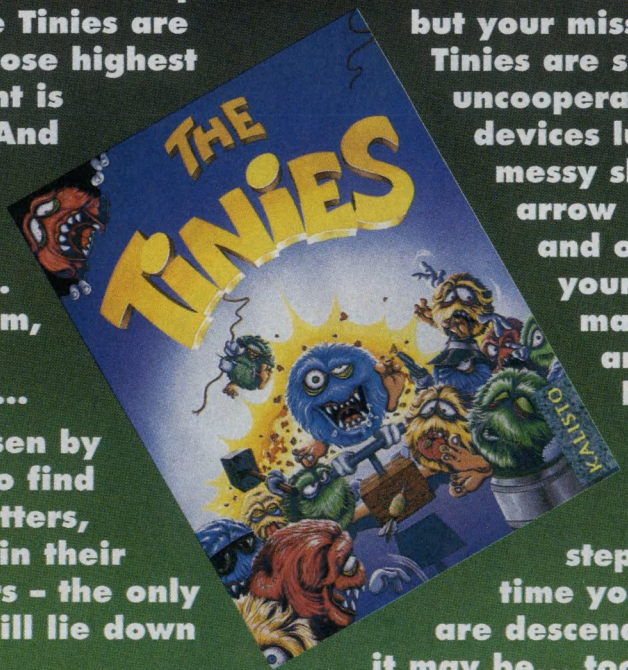

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Reader Service No. 62

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3

Breaking the mold

By Joseph McCullough

Compromises are an unfortunate burden the sports game enthusiast must bear when sitting down to play a new simulation. Baseball and football games never seem to have the right mix of stats and action, the best golf games require supercomputer-like power, and motorsports sims are difficult to control (I never have liked steering a 200hp beast with cursor keys!). Don't look now, but someone must have forgotten to tell Bethesda Softworks about this unnerving trend. With the release of **Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3** (**WGH3**), they have broken the mold. It is a uncompromising blend of strategy and action, with all the goodies thrown in to boot.

Top up

Fans of **WGH2** and the original will be pleased to note that nothing is missing from the earlier games that made them as successful as they were. Much, however, has been added. The entire interface has been upgraded to support full-colour VGA/MCGA graphics. Text menus are a thing of the past in **WGH3**. This improvement alone helps to immediately bring the game up to today's standards.

But wait! There's more! The biggest upgrade has been made in game play. In addition to the traditional top-down view of the rink, **WGH3** offers a ¾ view which adds greatly to the game's realism. Instead of tiny dots moving around in semi-random fashion, the players actually resemble humans! The ¾ view also makes the players much easier to control, which adds even more fun to the game. It's now easier to slam an opponent to the glass with full force, and the animation when a player is tripped is good enough

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And a Microphone

to evoke a few grimaces from anyone at the controls (ouch, that smarts!).

Ice pack

The beauty of ¾ view is that the game's designers not only increased realism, but they also added to the aesthetic appeal of the game. Instead of just seeing a two-dimensional slab of ice, the perspective is more 3-D. The retaining glass is now shown, as are advertisements around the rink as well as the screaming fans. Bethesda receives no time in the penalty box for their effort in this aspect of the game. The game's sound is also wondrous. Cold steel on ice. Bodies slamming. Sirens and buzzers. Cheers and boos from the crowd. The thwack of reinforced wood against hard rubber. The hockey experience has been captured by the wizards at Bethesda. These excellent sound effects are complemented by full commentary by the PA announcer after each goal, stoppage of play, or penalty. While not as vast in scope as the real-time play-by-play offered in **Hardball III**, the announcer in **WGH3** suffers none of the broken syntax and uneven phrasing found in the former.

As with any superior sports simulation, **WGH3** provides the player with numerous play options. All the standards are supported — straight arcade play, play and coach, coach only, and demo mode. The game also supports four different difficulty levels, and these can be mixed to create handicaps to accommodate less experienced players or opponents. Instant replay is also available, and one nice feature of this engine is the 'game highlights' choice displayed on the end-game menu. This cycles through each of the goals scored in the game. The player has total control over speed and direction of the film, so he can see the game-winning goal forwards and backwards to his heart's content.

Pucking hogs

The post-game menu includes options to review stats for the game. These include number of shots taken per period, penalties, and goals/assists awarded. It doesn't do a great job of tracking historical stats, but stat files can be saved and used with Bethesda's **Hockey League Simulator**.

WGH3 also supports some management and editing features that deem recognition. The coach can set his 'lines' (groups of players he'll send in during certain game situations) and insert them at any stoppage in play.

He can also control the team profile by making a series of choices before the game. For example, if he wants his team members to charge the goal every time the get the puck, he can choose to have his team play as 'puck hogs.' Finally, a play editor is included to give the coach-only player more control over his team.

The player can also edit his team in two different ways. Each team is given a set number of 'team points' which can be increased or decreased. The number of total team points determines how high the player will be able to set each sticker's ability ratings. Increase the team points and the team will have more ability points to use. This translates directly into better performance. Another way to edit is to stay within the team point cap. This allows the player to redistribute ability ratings without affecting the balance of power among the supplied teams.

In league

Hockey fans and people who thought the game was just an excuse to slug it out on an ice rink will both thoroughly enjoy **WGH3**. It's easy and fun to play, and has enough flexibility to satisfy every taste. One feature missing from the core game is a league function, but that, as well as some more thorough stats tracking, is covered in the companion **Hockey League Simulator** product (available shortly in a brand new version). With little competition in the hockey game niche, Bethesda could have rested on their laurels with **WGH2**. Instead, they improved the product greatly, and may even gain some customers who wouldn't have considered buying a hockey game in the first place. It's that good. ❑

Designed by
V J Lakshman

Published by
Bethesda Softworks

Systems
PC

Graphics
256 colour VGA/MCGA

Supports
All major sound cards, mouse, joystick

Notes
Requires 1 meg expanded memory for ¾ rink view

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Mindcraft presents: ***Siege***. Finally, a strategic simulation of pulse pounding, thought provoking medieval style castle assault.

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MINDCRAFT

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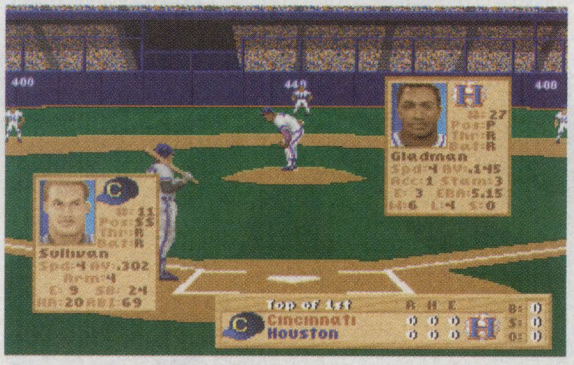
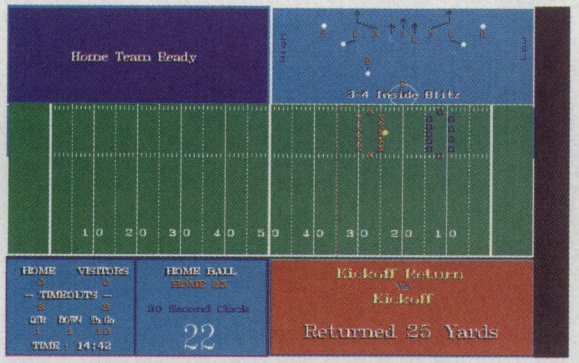
Actual screen photos from the IBM VGA version.

Reader Service No. 10

THE SPORTS LOCKER



Hardball III: the peanut factor



Cunning Football: sharing the action

Cunning Football

Designed and published by
Cass Cunningham

Systems
PC

Availability
Shareware version available for downloading from commercial networks such as CompuServe and GENie.
For registered version send $25 plus $1.50 shipping & handling ($4.00 outside the U.S.A.) to:
Cass Cunningham
P.O. Box 2551
San Pedro, CA 90733
USA
Add $1.00 for a 3.5" disk

I've been writing this column for over a year now, and along the way I have picked up bits (and bytes) of wisdom, made casual observances, and have had some interesting experiences. Individually, none of these nuggets of prose could possibly fill a page in this fine publication, but I think I've got enough miscellaneous ideas rattling around in my overworked brain to give it a collective go.

When I owned an Atari ST, a company (whose name I couldn't remember to save my life) released a fishing game based loosely on these concepts. If fishing, the most boring of all outdoor sports, can be simulated on a computer, why not other obscure but popular sports?

▪ My favorite example is hunting. If done right, it could be a laugh riot. Ya' know, choose a persona — will it be Bubba the 275-pound factory worker from Louisiana who likes to hunt 'coons with his 'coon dogs and ride to the woods in his rusted out '67 Ford pick-'em-up truck complete with gun rack and NRA bumper sticker?

Or maybe a British nobleman on a fox hunt with an entourage of servants clad in riding boots and funny hats? *(Or how about arming the fox with an Uzi? - Ed)* Next, choose the prey. This could be anything from raccoons to quail to deer to ducks. Depending on what's being hunted, the player would have to choose his equipment and weapon (and don't forget a six-pack of Dixie for Bubba!). Finally, the player could choose from a multitude of hunting sites, and make his decision based on weather reports, hunting reports, etc. Once the hunt begins, the game could resemble a role-playing adventure, where perception and cunning help track the beast. Once the prey is in the gun sights, hand-eye coordination would determine if a kill is made

▪ It's amazing what marketing and PR people will do to impress the press. For example, when I received my review copy of **Hardball III**, it was packed not in styrofoam, but actual peanuts! Strategically placed on top of the game box was a red 3" x 5" card with the slogan **Hardball III**. Baseball so real you'll taste the peanuts!' Slick, very slick. Probing deeper into the box I found a **Hardball III** T-shirt, which took one or two washings to eradicate the smell of salted nuts.

▪ Anyone who has read this column regularly knows how much I advocate modem play. Not one to break form, I couldn't let another opportunity go by to urge those without modems to run out and buy one. My arguments regarding commercial software are well known, so I won't harp on that again. There are equally compelling reasons to go online; namely, shareware and public domain software. On the CompuServe network alone one will find enough software and helpful data

Features:

- Human or computer opponents.
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- Different unit types combine to form division and corps.
- Full control over the national production system.
- A detailed supply system using railroads, wagons and ships.
- Naval system includes ocean and river going vessels.
- Economic system includes foreign trade and blockade runners.
- Beautiful 256 color VGA map that stretches from New Orleans to Philadelphia, from Kansas city to Bermuda.
- Digitised period graphics and VGA art work combine to provide the player with informative displays throughout the game.
- Fully integrated tactical combat system emphasizing command control and quick resolution of even the largest battles.
- Scenario editor allows players to construct their own battles or play those already included.

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Links 386 Pro: custom drivers included

files to satiate any need.

Some of the files available enhance existing commercial software. Team files for games as diverse as **Wayne Gretzky Hockey**, **Earl Weaver Baseball**, **Tony LaRussa Ultimate Baseball**, **Mike Ditka Football**, and **TV Sports Basketball** are all available for the pennies it takes to download them. In addition, hobbyists like yourself have cooked up bug fixes and work-arounds for these and other popular games. It has been well-publicized that '**LaRussa Baseball**' did not initially come with a good team editor. Just a few weeks after it was released, a hobbyist named Keith Jefferson uploaded a stand-alone program to CompuServe which fixed this oversight. Other programs in the CompuServe libraries include a player editor for **Tom Landry Strategy Football**, a roster print program for use with **Mike Ditka Football**, and a utility which allows a player to run more than one league with **Earl Weaver Baseball**.

Ready-to-play shareware sports games are also available for downloading. There is at least one game in the libs for every major sport, most of them priced at less than half what you'd pay for a commercial product.

The great majority of these games are stats-based, non-graphic simulations, but there are a few action games around. One of my favorites is Cass Cunningham's **Cunning Football**.This is an action game with detailed graphics and sound. Version 4.5 includes rushing stats, passing stats and more. It also supports a play diagram feature which aides the player in controlling his team.The registered version includes a 60-page hard-copy manual, two-player mode, more game stats, and more plays.

▪ One look through the accessories rack at the local computer store reveals a plethora of custom joysticks; most designed for flight simulators. It's no secret that most of these sticks are less than adequate for sports games. One genre in particular is nearly impossible to control with any joystick driving sims. Why won't some enterprising company design a steering wheel-like controller for use with driving games? I'd buy one.

▪ The popularity of Microsoft Windows 3.x has not yet truly affected the gaming industry, but I predict it will soon. We've already seen two golf games ported to Windows (**Microsoft Golf** and **PGA Tour Golf for Windows**), as well as some board games (**Monopoly and Risk**). I see a few advantages of this approach to gaming. First, it will force game manufacturers to use a common interface. Second, it will also force programmers to use higher graphics resolutions. The base resolution in Windows is 640x480. Most DOS-based VGA games today can only do 256 colours in half that resolution.

More importantly for gamers, however, is a possible offshoot of Windows' popularity. Since Windows is a graphical user interface, it begs for high-caliber co-processed video cards to perform at its peak. Many have been introduced, with the most popular being the line of cards from ATI Technologies Inc. My hope is that game manufacturers will notice the popularity of these cards and begin writing video drivers for their games which take advantage of video co-processors. Games like **Links386 Pro** have custom drivers included, but they only address the resolution, not the co-processor. I'd like to see them do the latter so that we gamers with co-processor cards can start seeing an increase in video performance. The AdLib and SoundBlaster cards created a sound standard. Let's hope to see a video standard in the near future. ❑

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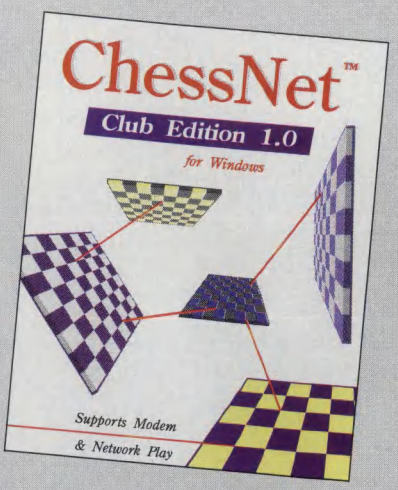

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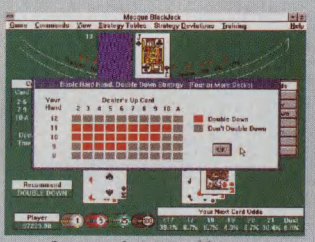
Split hand with hand values, card count, odds calculations and strategy recommendation windows displayed.



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Card Player Magazine

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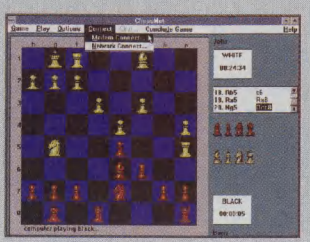
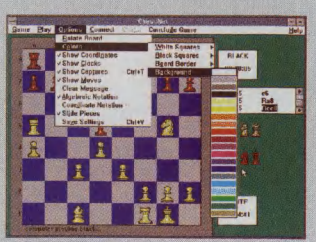


Play against the computer or against friends via modem or network.



The options menu shows some of the many game features.

Note: All screen displays are from Windows versions at VGA resolution.

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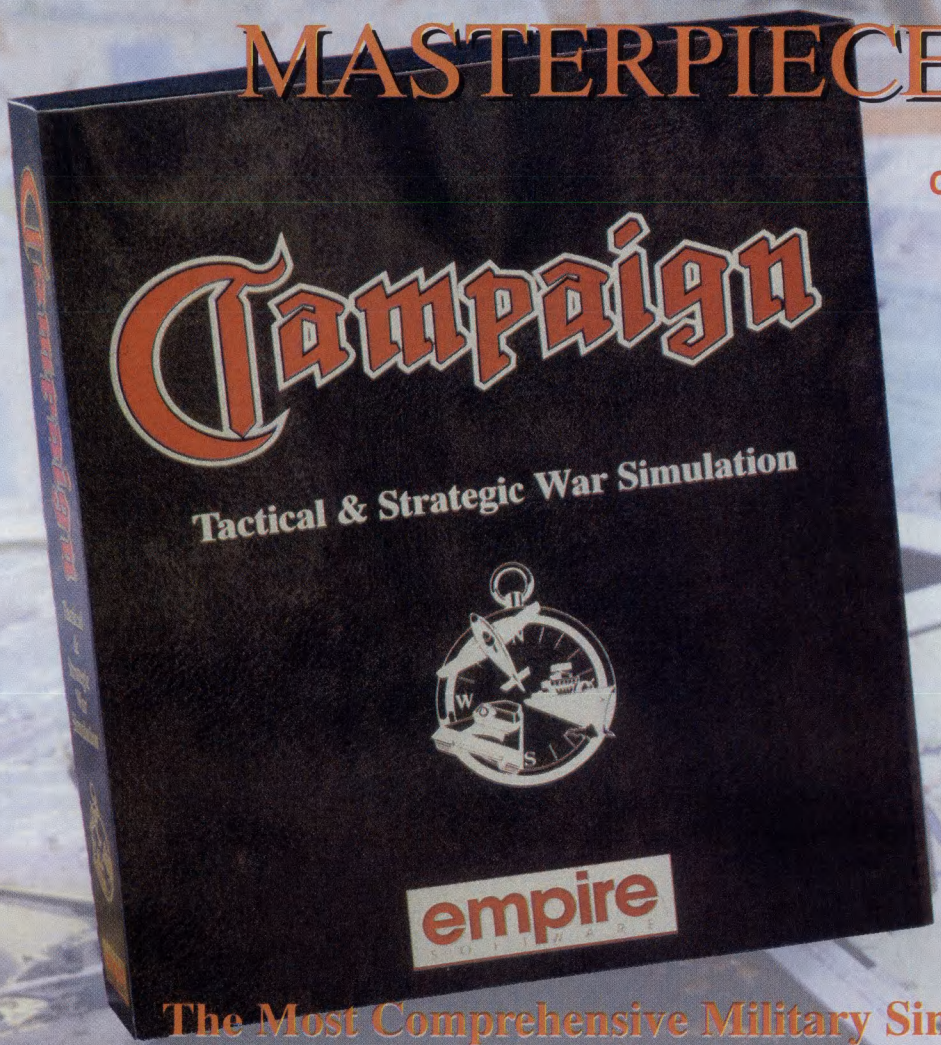
THE MILITARY MASTERPIECE



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Reader Service No. 98

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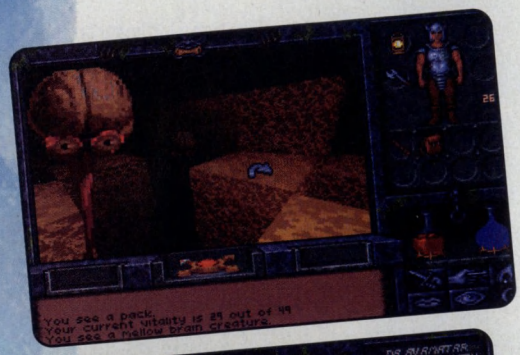
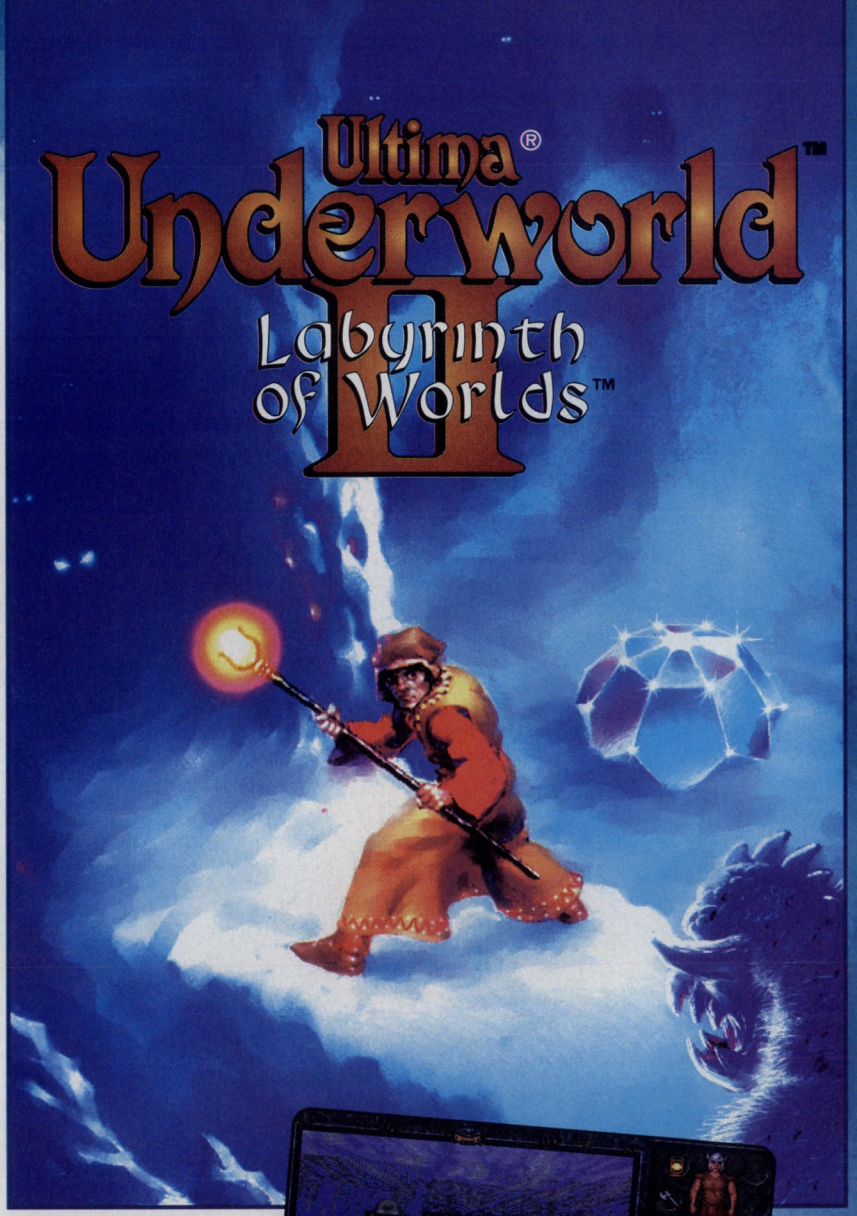
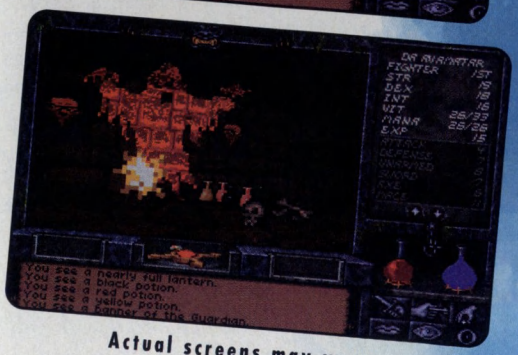
Ultima® Underworld™ II Labyrinth of Worlds™







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My how times flies. It seems like it was only yesterday when you were spanking Junior for stuffing cranberry sauce into the disk drive, and yet the season of alleged goodwill is now with us again. What fun. To help things along we proudly present a guide to the years games which we think will either make: a) wonderful presents or, b) a boost for the log fire.

-Brian Walker

Strategy

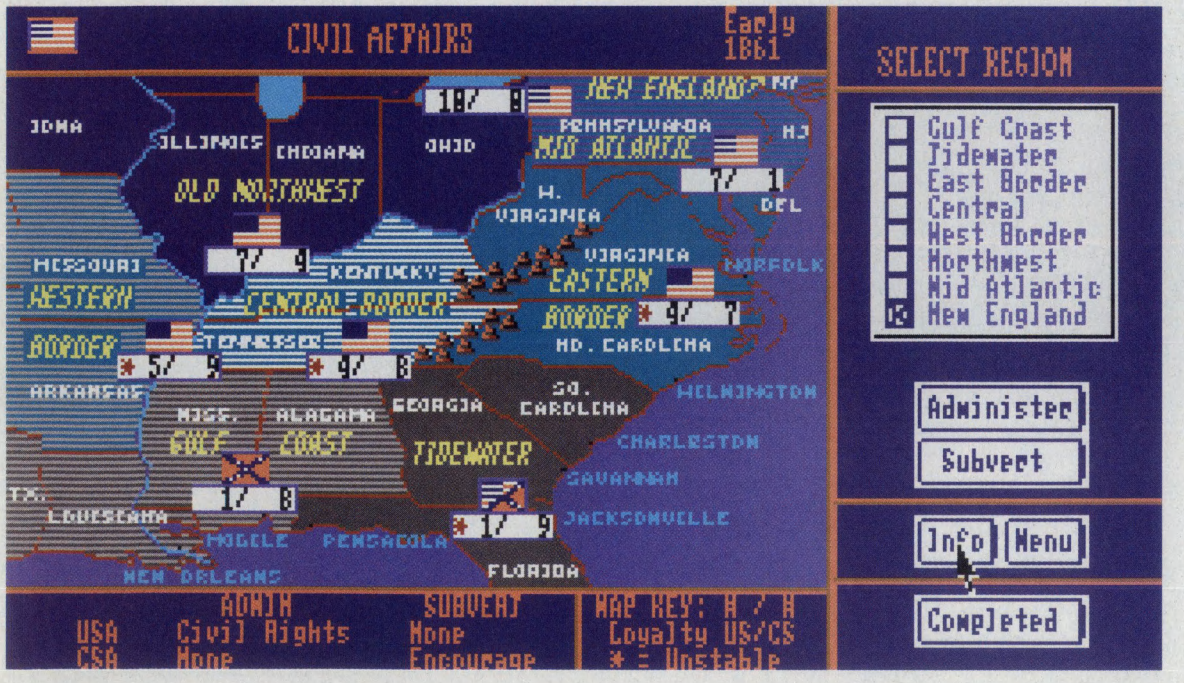
Dune (Virgin)
French hybrid strategy/adventure game. Almost as good as the movie (PC).

Conflict: Korea (SSI)
Excellent simulation of a little known war (PC).

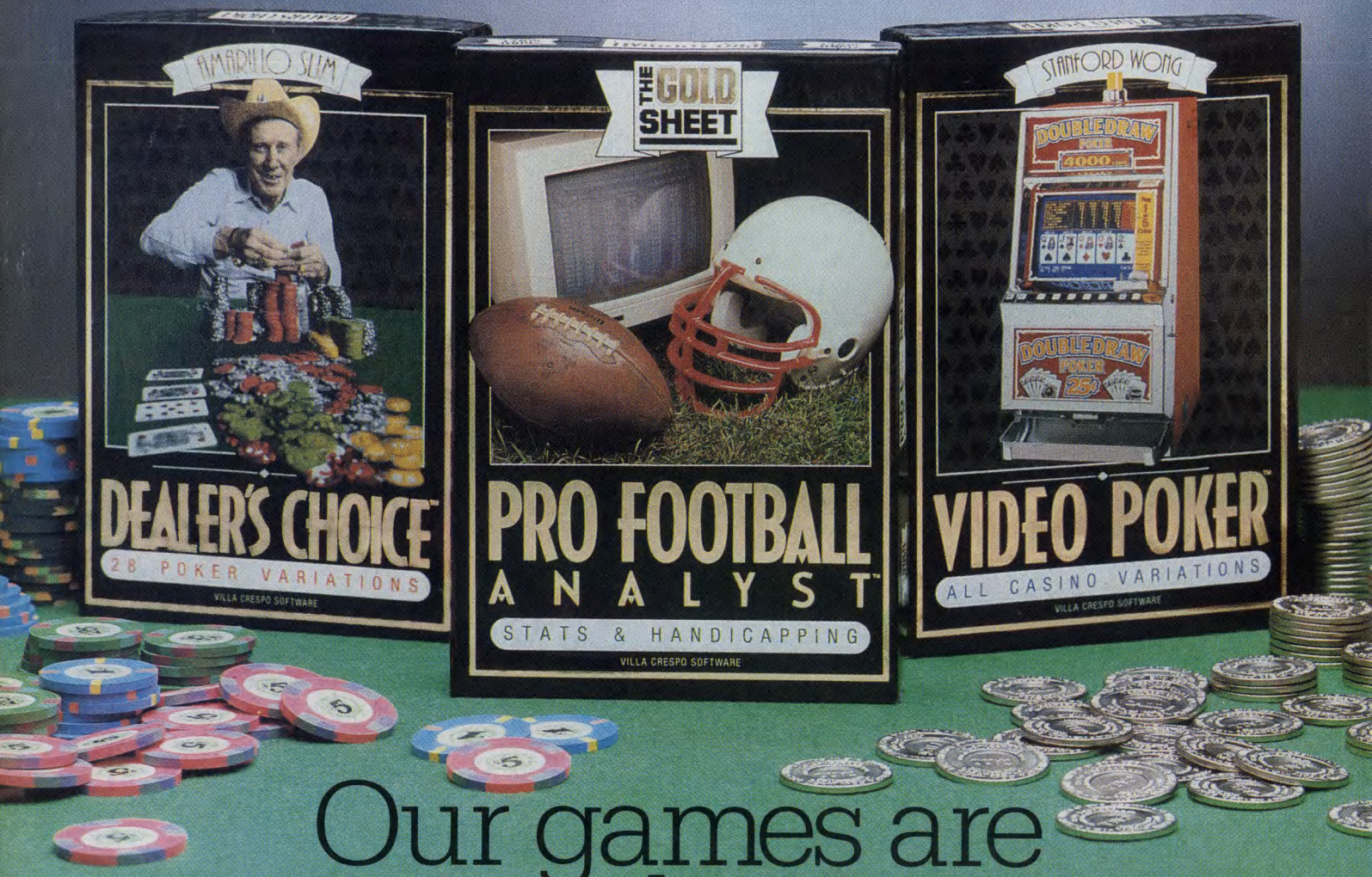
No Greater Glory (SSI)
EGA graphics don't matter in this tough American Civil War game that focuses as much on the political aspect as on the combat. Comes with the novel *Red Badge of Courage*, thus providing two presents for the price of one! (PC, Mac).

Civilization (Microprose)
Humongous 'creation' game from Sid Meier. A 'must buy' gift for brainy friends (PC, Amiga)

Siege (Mindcraft)
Excellent barn storming game with a modem option due soon (PC).



SSI's No Greater Glory: two gifts for the price of one



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Robosport for Windows: Maxis wackiness

The Pacific Islands: Team Yankee 2 (Readysoft/Empire)
Russians invade Hawaii shock! Soviet surfers seek the big one!
Recommended tank sim (PC Amiga).

Battle Isle (Ubi Soft)*
Abstract war/strategy game that has it's admirers. Amiga interface sucks the big one. (PC, Amiga).

Global Conquest (Microprose)
Light-hearted conquest game from light-hearted Dan Bunten. Modem play the way to go on this one (PC).

Powermonger (Electronic Arts)*
Sonically and graphically impressive conquest game. Good introduction for those who think strategy = boredom (PC, Amiga).

Global Effect (Millennium/EA)
Save the gay veggies environmental disaster game. Worthy but dull (PC, Amiga).

Robosport for Windows (Maxis)
Tactical wargame involving wacky robots. Likeable, but lacks replay value. Modem option is a bonus (all formats)

The Perfect General (QQP)*
Tactical wargame best played by modem. Guaranteed victory over the computer but still fun from the newcomers of the year (PC and Amiga).

Crisis in the Kremlin (Spectrum Holobyte)
Ideal gift for Jesse Helms and all the unemployed red baiters. Here, moron, take this and learn something. A game that teaches as well as challenges (PC).

The Lost Admiral (QQP)
Abstract naval wargame that offers tough opponent. PC). Almost chess-like in terms of strategy required.

Patton Strikes Back (Broderbund)
Chris Crawford's 'wargame for the rest of us'. Who, exactly, are 'the rest of us'? (PC, Mac).

Fireteam 2200 (RAW/Storm)
Re-release of an average space tactical wargame. Best by modem (PC, Amiga).

Risk for Windows (Virgin)
Good computer opponent and Windows crispness but that's about all (PC).

Sim Ant (Maxis)
Daft game involving ants in the back garden. Ideal for those interested in the mating habits of the insects (PC Mac).

Dreadnoughts (Turcan Research)
Weird interface but worth persevering with for those interested in World War I naval battles (PC, Amiga).

Megafortress (Three Sixty)*
Based on the Dale Brown book *Flight of the Old Dog*, this is an excellent strategy/flight sim hybrid (PC, Amiga).

A-Train (Maxis)
Substantial game more concerned with the stock market than Puffing Billys. Recommended, but prepare for a steep learning curve (PC, Mac).

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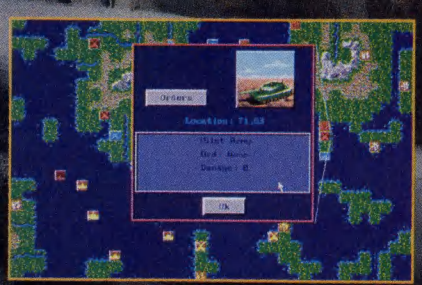
By Mark Baldwin and Bob Rakosky



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IBM screens shown. Actual screens may vary.

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Reader Service No. 88

V for Victory: war is never pretty?

Theatre of Way (Three Sixty Pacific)
Strange, abstract chess-like game that runs in real-time and super VGA. Perfect for the friend who has everything. Except this. (PC).

Conquest of Japan (Impressions)
More Kurosawa than Kung-Fu, this tactical level wargame looks very pretty in high-res mode. Slow speed will force an early switch to standard res. Still, an interesting conversion of a miniatures based game system (PC).

High Command (Colorado Creations)
Huge WWII game. 'The strategy/simulation of the year' quoth our reviewer (PC).

Utopia (Konami)*
One of the better **Populous** clones (PC, Amiga).

Mega lo Mania (Ubi Soft)
One of the average **Populous** clones (PC, Amiga)

Realms (Virgin)
One of the lesser **Populous** clones (PC, Amiga)

Harpoon (Three Sixty)
This huge modern naval warfare simulation offers users an alternative lifestyle (PC, Amiga).

Carriers at War (SSG)
SSG's long awaited War in the Pacific game. May be a bit passive for some, though the quality is undeniable (PC)

Merchant Colony (Impressions)
The idea of sailing off to faraway lands and trading goods with the natives is a good one. The execution isn't. (PC, Amiga).

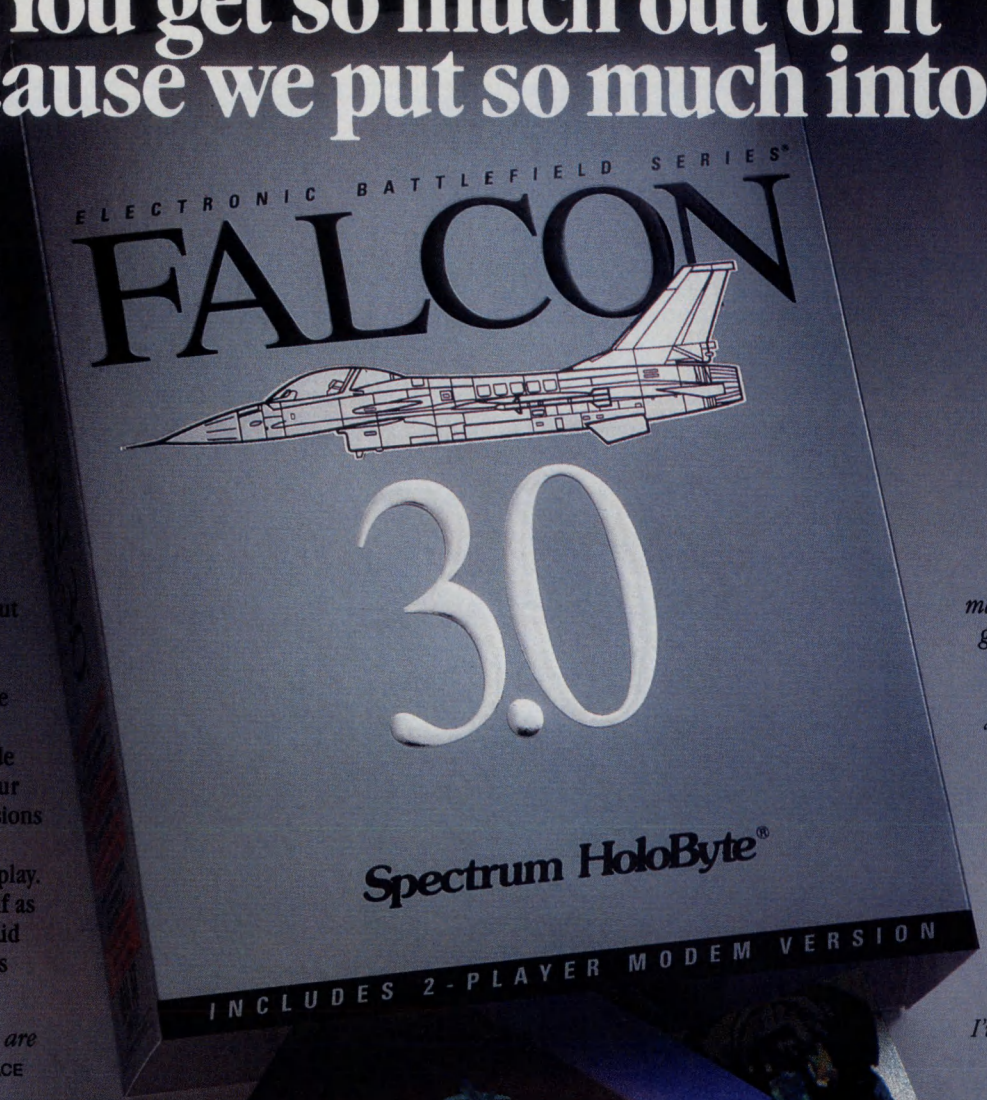
V For Victory (Three Sixty Pacific)
World War II was never as pretty as this. Outstanding wargame in super VGA (PC, Mac).

Carrier Strike (SSI)*
Gary Grigsby third game in the series which comprises **Second Front**, and **Western Front**. This time, carrier battles in the Pacific is the subject matter.
Despite a constantly improving interface these games are strictly for hardcore wargamers (PC)

Spaceward Ho! (New World)
Excellent strategy game featuring space cowboys. Yee haw! Those durned aliens, fastest pun on Mars, etc (PC, Mac).

Discovery (Impressions)
A game that will have you praying for land (PC, Amiga). ❑

You get so much out of it because we put so much into it.



We could tell you about the superb graphics we put into Falcon 3.0™. And the incredibly real F-16 feel. And the sensational scope that delivers everything from Instant Action arcade excitement to plotting your own Red Flag training missions to engaging in a different campaign every time you play. But we couldn't say it half as well as the critics have said it. Look at the high marks they've given Falcon 3.0.

"The visuals during flight are awesome." JIM DOUGLAS, ACE

"If you aren't in the armed services–and maybe even if you are–this is as close as you can come to flying the Falcon."
PETER OLAFSON, COMPUTE

"The graphics are stunning, the sound is incredible and the game play is a rush."
DAVID ETHEL, VIDEO GAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

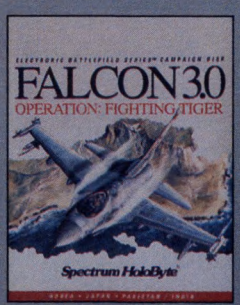
"It's not so much a game system as it is a way of life."
EVAN BROOKS, COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

"Realistic, contoured terrain. Your view from the cockpit is the best in the flight simulator world. And Falcon's user interface is slick and easy to use." PC GAMES EDITORS

"Be excited. Falcon 3.0 makes other efforts in this genre seem like test runs for the real thing."
STRATEGY PLUS EDITORS

"The most complete and accurate jet fighter simulation to be found this side of a security clearance. Period."
RICHARD SHEFFIELD, COMPUTE

"The most appealing aspect is the realism. This is as true to life as I've seen on a computer."
COMPUTER GAME REVIEW EDITORS



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Reader Service No. 6

Xmas Extra

Gateway: (opposite): challenging adaptation

Star Trek 25th Anniversary (below): a logical buy

Adventure

Star Trek 25th Anniversary (Interplay)
Excellent adaptation of the famous series. A logical buy (PC).

Martian Memorandum (Access)
Visually impressive, introductory level adventure game. A good starting point for knobheads who think computer games mean **Space Invaders** (PC).

The Adventures of Willy Beamish (Dynamix)
'Horny ain't corny' we said. Now ain't that the truth (PC, Amiga, CD ROM)

Conan the Cimmarian (Virgin)
Conan goes shopping and lops somebody's head off. Recommended (PC, Amiga).

ADMIRAL
WE HAVE READ YOUR REPORT ON THE PROBLEMS AT POLLUX V AND EVALUATE YOUR PERFORMANCE AT 97%. YOU AND YOUR CREW RECEIVE 3 COMMENDATION POINTS

Gateway (Legend)
Moderately challenging adaptation of the Frederick Pohl science fiction novel (PC).

Bard's Tale Construction Kit (Interplay)
Build your own dungeon and then disappear forever (PC)

Conquest of the Longbow (Sierra On-Line)
Rob the rich and buy this game (PC).

Police Quest 3 (Sierra On-line)
Yo Sherlock! Sgt Sunny Bonds represents the fat blue line in what is likely to be the last in the series. Will Rodney King buy it? (PC).

Another World (Interplay)
French adventure game. Attractive puzzles with an arcade heart (PC, Amiga).

Elvira II (Accolade)
The Breasts of the Black Widow meet The Jaws of Cerebus. A tasty snack for those with fast hands.

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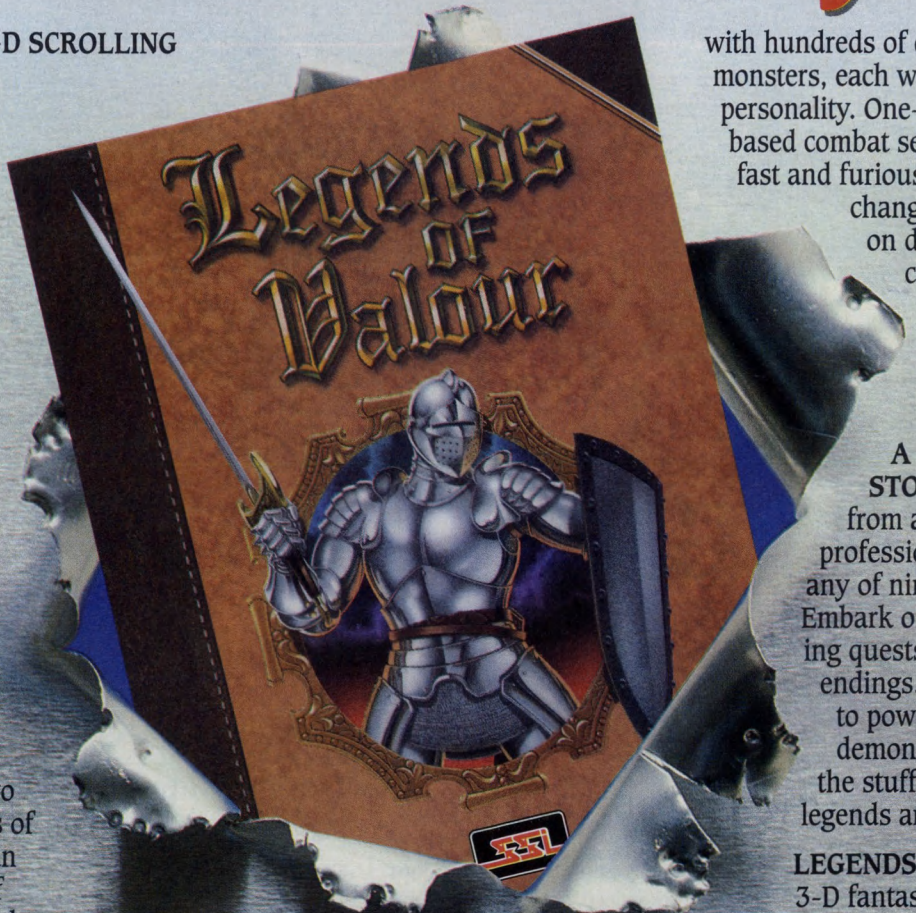
THE SMOOTHEST 3-D SCROLLING GRAPHICS EVER! *Ultima® Underworld,™* move over! Legends of Valour™ sets a new standard with the smoothest, most life-like screen scrolling in fantasy adventures. The fast, seamless first-person view never jerks or slows down — even when you're turning. And unlike the competition, our 256-color VGA texture and detail is retained even when you move close to an object.



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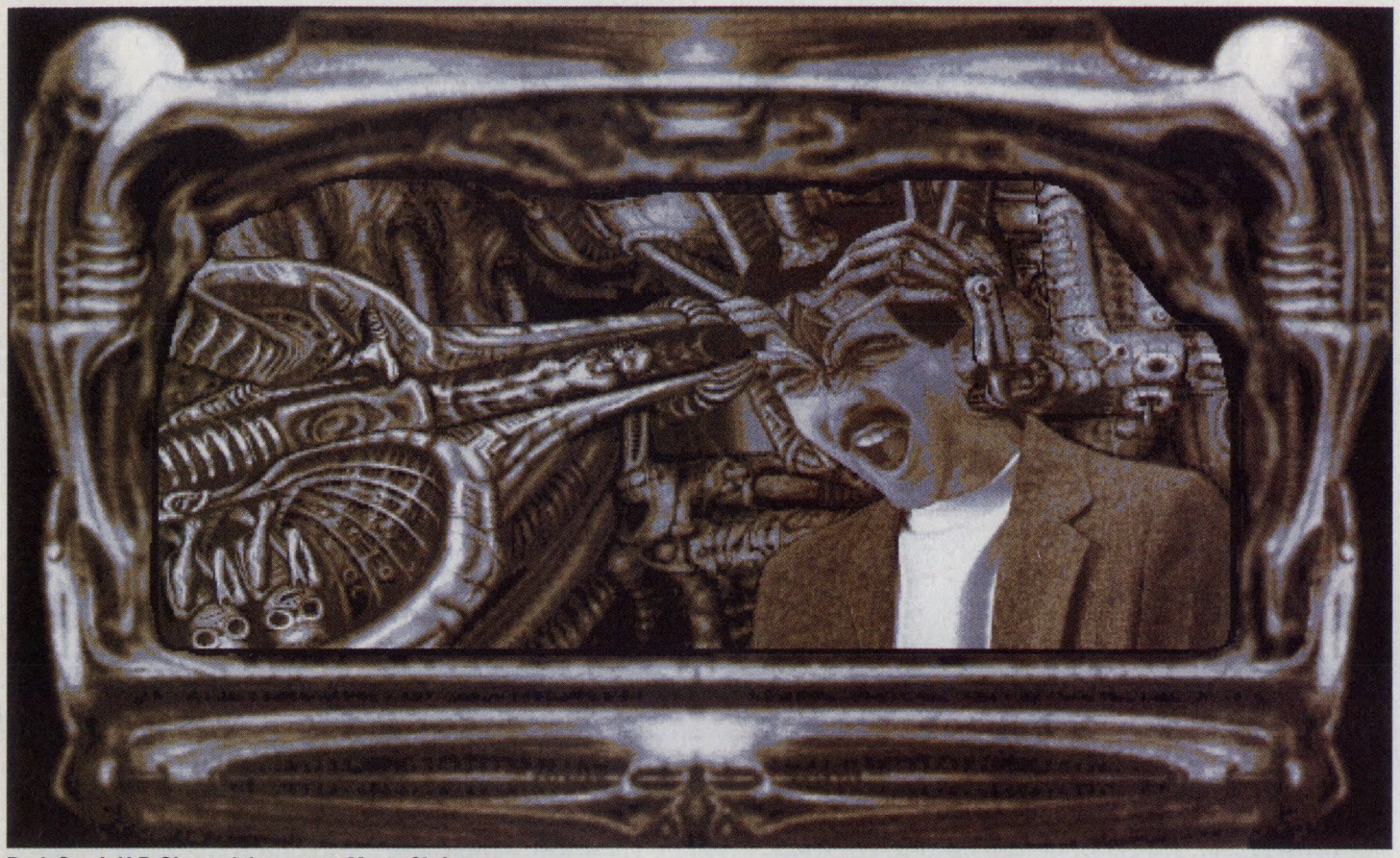


Dark Seed: H R Giger wishes you a Merry Christmas

Magic Candle 2 (Mindcraft)
Belated sequel that offers too little, too late (PC).

The Secret of Monkey Island 2 (Lucasarts)
Contender for adventure game of the year (PC).

Leisure Suit Larry 5 (Sierra)
Passionate Patty goes under the covers. Harmless fun, or sexist drivel? Only you, the punter, can decide (PC).

Spellcasting 201 (Legend)
Text adventure with graphics. Sexist drivel or harmless fun? Only you, the punter... (PC)

Les Manley: Lost in LA (Accolade)
Movie-style adventure game in which lots of women almost take their clothes off. Harmless drivel, or sexist fun? Only you... (PC).

Ragnarok (Norsehelm)
Role playing game which lives up to that claim, despite static graphics. Recommended (PC).

Twilight 2000 (Paragon/Empire)
Interesting story but disappointing conversion of the GDW pen and paper game (PC, Amiga).

Planet's Edge (New World)
Buggy ride through space in this very ambitious adventure (PC).

Eye of the Beholder II (SSI)
See above (PC, Amiga).

Free DC (Cineplay)
Introductory adventure game set in the 'human zoo', otherwise known as Washington DC. Visit there and see why (PC).

Dark Seed (Cyberdreams)
Aliens ate my turkey. Seasonal images from the pen of *Alien* designer H R Giger. First class gore for adventurers with a strong stomach (PC).

Sea Rogue (Microprose)
Unusual, though effective sunken treasure hunt game. Excellent gift for salty dogs and anyone with an interest in things nautical (PC).

Dark Queen of Krynn (SSI)
Recommended by our Queen of Gush, MaMa (PC, Amiga).

Treasures of the Savage Frontier (SSI)
Jagaerda, Amanitas, and Siulajia camp it up in this superior **AD&D** adventure (PC).

Ultima VII (Origin) *
Huge role playing game widely believed to be the catalyst for the popular phrase 'Get a life' (PC).

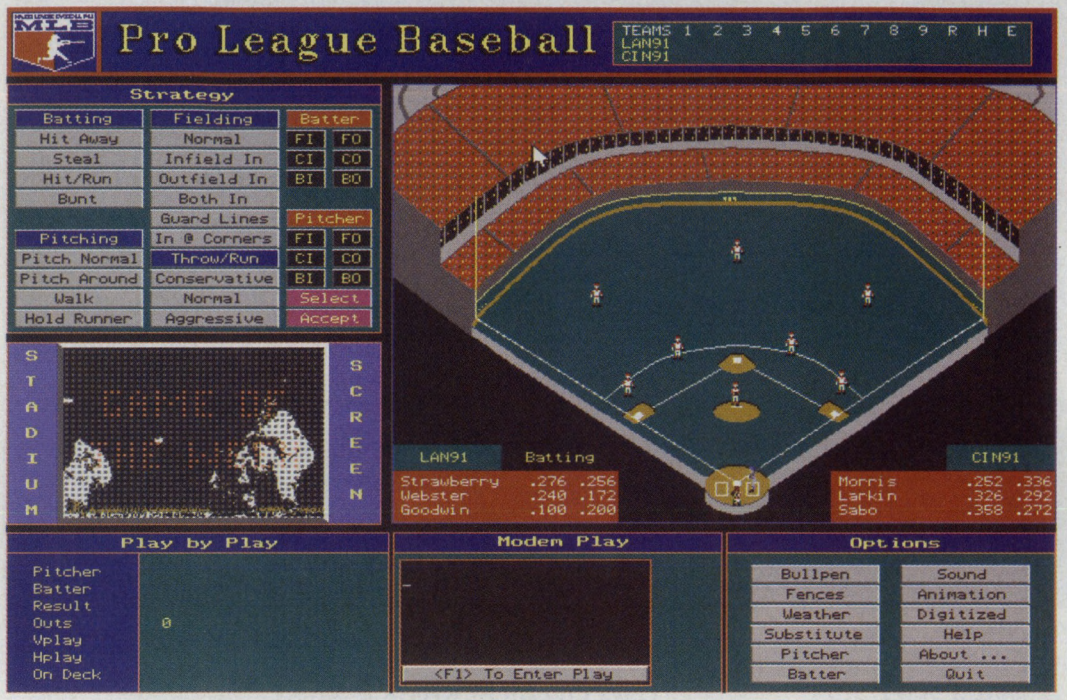
Plan From Outer Space (Konami/Gremlin)
Imaginative adaptation of the world's worst movie, but it won't stop Bela Lugosi turning in his grave (PC, Amiga).

Ultima Underworld (Origin)
What is it about dungeons? (PC)

Darklands (Microprose)
All you've ever wanted to know about 15th century medieval Germany compressed onto lots of floppies. Our Mr Wartofsky says *'Klasse'*, but make sure you get the update. ❑

Xmas Extra

Sports



Tony La Russa's Ultimate Baseball (SSI)*
Winner of the World Series, while the add-on disks are the crowning glory (PC).

Bo Jackson Baseball (Data East)
Action oriented baseball game that's easy on the eye (PC).

Hardball III (Accolade) *
Top notch, action based baseball game (PC).

Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Gold Signature Edition (Accolade) *
Excellent alternative to **Links**, especially for players looking for a course building facility (PC).

Microsoft Golf (Microsoft) *
Essentially this is **Links** for Windows. An excellent adaptation as one would expect from Microsoft, and the best Windows game to date (PC).

David Leadbetter's Greens (Microprose)
Not up to par, but still the only golf game with a modem option.

Links 386 Pro (Access) *
A long way ahead of the field. Tops (PC).

PGA Tour Golf for Windows (EA)
What's the point? (PC).

Cricket Simulator (Nelson Electronics)
The perfect present for millions of Americans (PC).

NFL Pro League Football (Micro Sports)
One of the best gridiron games to date, especially good modem option (PC).

NFL (Konami)
Despite the title, players come from the land-of-make believe (PC).

The Gold Sheet (Villa Crespo)
Database that provides predictions for Pro Football games. Ideal present for those who like a flutter (PC).

Playmaker Football (Broderbund)
An old 'un but good 'un, more abstract then most on the subject (PC).

Micro League Football (Micro League Sports)
Stats based game ideal for league play (PC).

Winter Challenge (Accolade)
Great gift for those who like turkey for Christmas (PC).

ABC Wide World of Sports Boxing (Data East)
Floats like a buffalo, stings like a gnat (PC).

Mike Ditka Ultimate Football (Accolade)
Flash graphics cannot conceal defensive weaknesses (PC).

Jimmy Connors Pro Tennis Tour (Ubi Soft)
Disappointing conversion of the utterly brilliant Amiga game known as **Pro Tennis Tour 2** (PC, Amiga).

Road to the Final Four (Bethesda)
Basketball game with not much to beat. But it still lost (PC)

World Circuit (Microprose)
Formula One sim high on gameplay, low on realism (PC, Amiga).

John Madden II (EA)
A classic game gets the treatment and comes up a winner (PC).

Grand Prix Unlimited (Accolade)
Gameplay inferior to MIcroprose's **World Circuit** but comes with a track builder (PC). ❑

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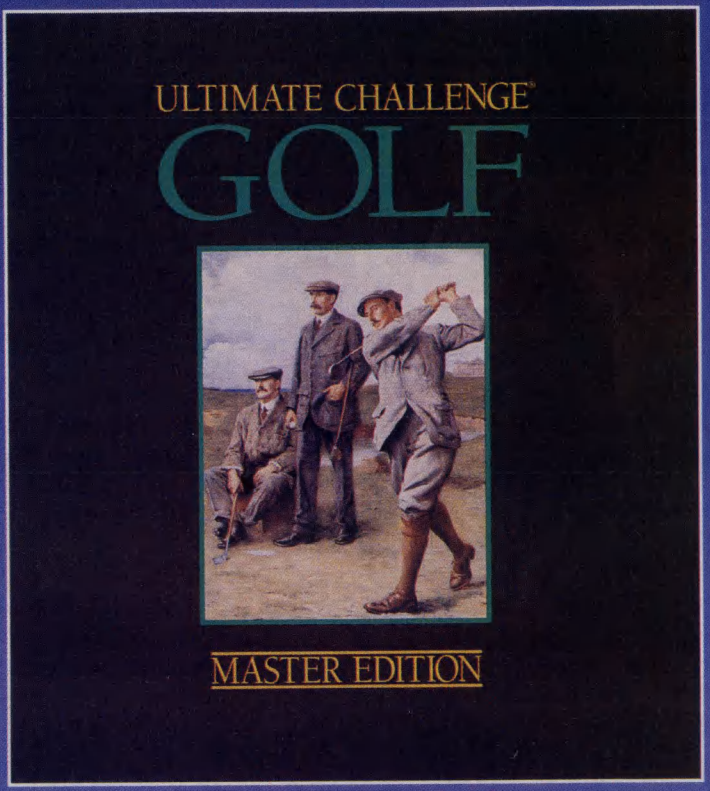

"As far as I'm concerned, you only need to have one golf game on your computer, and Ultimate Challenge Golf is it. Everything I can think of that should be in a computer golf game is in there."
C.P. — Registered User

"Once you play this it is tough to go back to the other type of golf games. Once my friends play it, they show up all hours wanting to play more. It's a fun game to play. You are actually part of the game rather than just tapping the keyboard for a simulated swing."
J.M. — Registered User

Why Ultimate Challenge Golf Is Different

The *Game* Of Golf Versus The *Look* Of Golf

The other major games are primarily graphics programs, simulating the *"look" of golf.* Ultimate Challenge Golf truly simulates the *"game" of golf* with tremendous depth and precision, including more course data and more shotmaking options than any other game.

Golf *Knowledge* Versus Finger *Dexterity*

The other major games are arcade games. A player's shotmaking skills are defined by his *finger coordination,* tapping keys to hit shots. In Ultimate Challenge Golf shotmaking skill is determinate upon the player's *course management skill* and *golf knowledge,* with no "coordination tests."

True Shots Versus *Random* Shots

The other major games use a simple shot mechanism which determines each shot based on the player's *random finger coordination.* The Ultimate Challenge Golf shot mechanism took *12 years* of intense research and development to fully assemble. It *assimilates thousands of factors* in determining a *true shot* every time. (Just for fun one day we created a finger coordination shot mechanism superior to any other — in *just 3 hours.*)

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ADVENTURE LIKE NEVER BEFORE...

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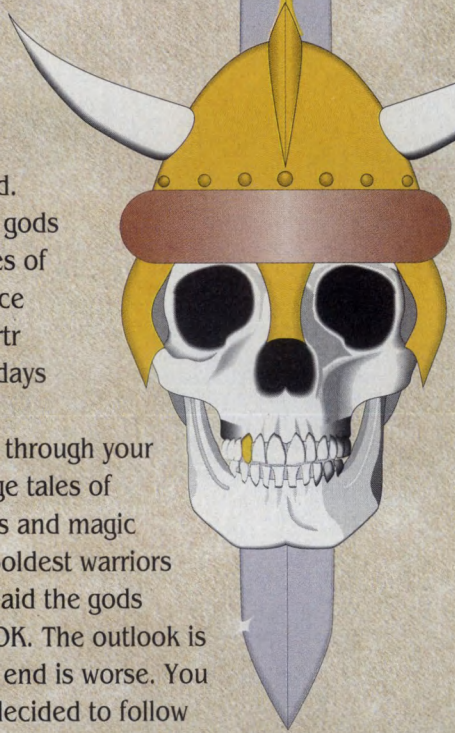

The year is 999 A.D. The time of great dread has come. Long have the Viking prophets foretold of RAGNAROK, the final battle of the gods, which will determine the fate of the world. From before the ancient times, the great gods of your people - Odin, Thor and the forces of Asgard - have championed the human race and have withstood the power of evil Surtr and his hoards of fire demons. Now the days have become dark and cold.

Many travelers and warriors have passed through your village into the wild lands beyond. Strange tales of distant lands, wizards, powerful creatures and magic are whispered by firelight. Some of the boldest warriors say that the final great Viking quest is to aid the gods themselves as they prepare for RAGNAROK. The outlook is grim, but to stay behind and wait for the end is worse. You have packed your belongings and have decided to follow the dark trail into the forest...

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- Explore over 100 action-packed realms, featuring vivid, superfast VGA graphics.
- Enter a highly interactive world where you pursue quests and adventures as you see fit... no set story line to follow.

Challenging and Intriguing.

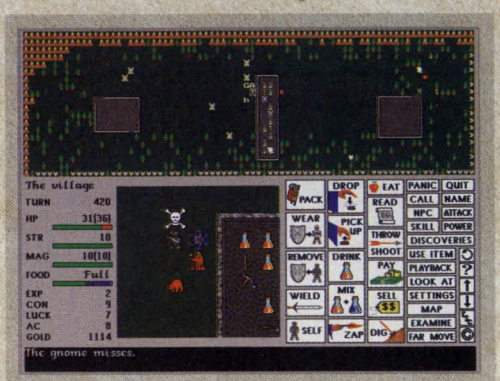
- Master the use of over 200 magical artifacts.
- Encounter up to 200 distinct races of beings
- Acquire the skills and knowledge needed to finally defeat Surtr and his hoards of Fire Demons.

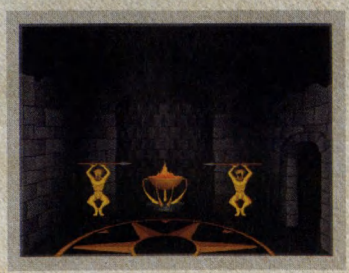
Why be human?

- Shed your human form as you learn the arcane skills of polymorph and transformation.

Easy to play!

- Extensive on-line help and intuitive interfaces have you playing immediately.
- Infinite variability and non-stop action will keep you coming back.





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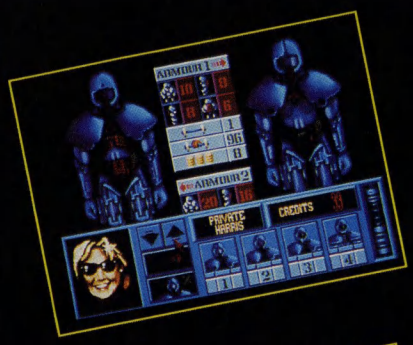

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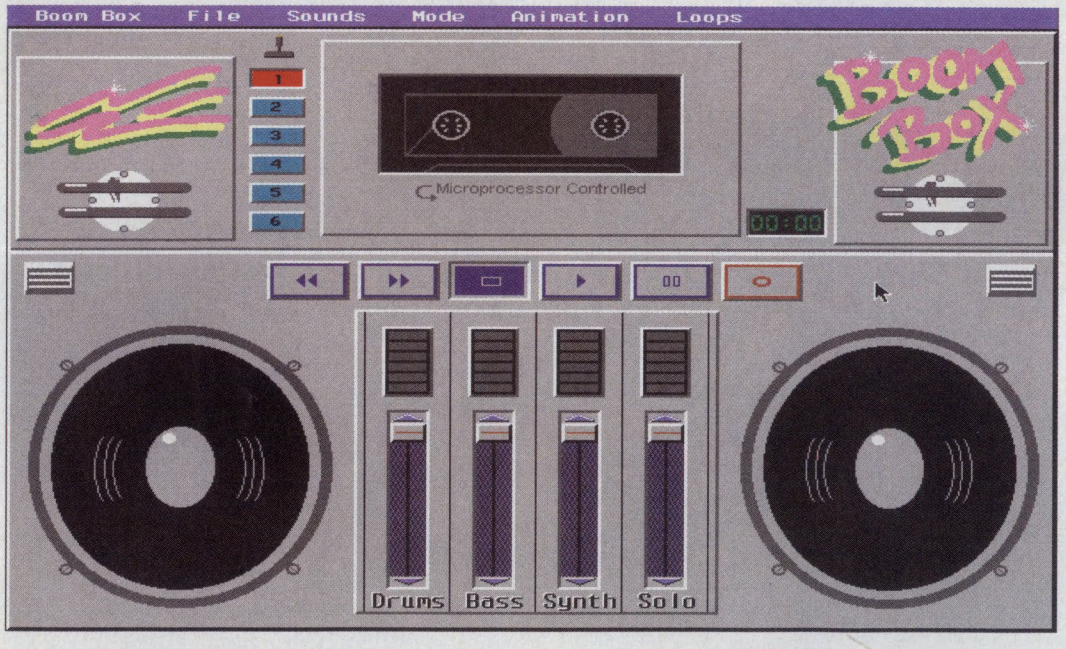
The Weird, The Wonderful, and the 'It does What?'



Boom box: a blast for disc jockeys

Boom Box (Dr T)

Yo bro! Totally deaf and wicked, don't diss it kiss it, etc. This extraordinary program transforms the PC into a beat box rather than a bleep box.

'Mix that mouse and rock the house.You don't wanna bleep, you don't wanna be cheap, so get with the boom an' go top of the heap.' (Copyright Rap Plus Productions)

The Wedding Planner (Ninga Software)

Wedding tackle simulator. Ideal present for those who have trouble getting ready for the 'the big day'.

Look out for the divorce planner upgrade (PC)

Strip Poker III (Artworx)

Wankware for the truly desperate (PC)

Barbie PC Fashion Designer & Color

The perfect gift for those seeking a path through the valley of the inflatable dolls (PC).

Solitaire's Journey (QQP)

Excellent variations on this classic game from a company that know what gamers want (PC).

Design Your Own Railroad

Working on the railroad? The model railroad, that is. If so then this simulation of a simulation could be of interest. Is there anything a computer can't do? (PC)

Coffee Break Series (Villa Crespo)

Bargain collection of card games featuring people with names like 'Amarillo Slim'. Many opportunities to shout 'you cheatin' critter' at the computer (PC)

Failsafe Computer Guardian (Villa Crespo)

Friends, family, associates, are potential enemies of your computer system. 'The Guardian' tells unwelcome tinkerers where to get off. Also protects against headaches and viruses. Run before going to bed and don't forget the glass of water (PC)

Game-Maker (Recreational Software)

Bored with today's crop of games (you mad fool!)? Then make your own with this program. Build dungeons, create characters, draw blocks, go absolutely stark staring bonkers (PC)

Lotto Gold (Capstone)

Lottery analysis program. Track and analyze winning lottery numbers; biorhythms, fibonacci sequences, hash analysis (!), mean recursion, co-occurrences. Someone, somewhere, understands all this. But it ain't me, babe (PC)

Tristan (Amtex)

The world's first (and last?) pinball simulation. Nudge that co processor, tilt that monitor (PC) ❑

Mac flack

I have been reading your interesting and attractive magazine for more than a year now and, until recently, have not had reason to complain. Let me make it clear that I am not going to argue with someone's review of a product - being a writer and a teacher, I am comfortable with contrary opinions.

I will take you to task for the subscription advertisement on page 48 of the September issue, though. I have been buying your publication at a local newsstand and when I saw the ad, I became interested in taking up your offer. What a deal, I thought, a game that I was already interested in, free with my subscription to a magazine which I was already buying.

But I could not find anywhere on the order form to indicate what kind of computer I own (it's a Macintosh IIcx). So, I called the toll-free number in the ad and was told that the offer was for IBM compatibles users only. This is frustrating and unfair. Why should PC owners get a deal that does not apply to other computer users?

It is irritating enough for Mac owners to choose from the very low number of games to purchase; do we have to be insulted by national publications that act as if we don't exist? Could you not, as powerful editor-person, find Macintosh versions of games to offer with subscriptions deals? I await your informative reply.
Rick Clemons
Macomb, IL 61455

It's a fair cop, 'guv. Our deal with Microprose was for the PC version only. Sorry about any confusion but don't worry, with the way prices are falling we'll soon be able to offer a free PC with every subscription - `powerful editor-person'.

Chip rip

Why can your advertisers advertise one price and charge another? In the September issue of your magazine, Chips and Bits had **The Perfect General** priced at $34, but when I called to order it they said it was $38. Sounds like serious misrepresentation to me.
Walter Bibb
Roanoke, VA 24014

In the cut throat world of mail order retailing prices can change daily, which is why the advertiser in question includes the disclaimer 'Price and availablilty subject to change'.

Write off

Now that the dust has settled regarding the publication in the US, and we are back to the normal delivery date, I wish to make a few observations.

Whilst the quality of the reporting is as good as ever, I wondered what happened to the Rebound feature? I always looked forward to that particular page as it gave me a good idea of what other 'strategists' were thinking. I was also useful to keep up with friends (I got the **ATP** sound driver from one of them).
A Verhaeghe
London NW9 5BZ
UK

Here 'tis

Degenerate

I have read the last few issues of your magazine and have seen its quality degenerate. the last issue I bought, however, hit a new low (issue 23).

You should change your name from Computer Games Strategies *(sic)* to Games Commercials. Far too many of the articles on wargames were written as a preview of a new game in which nothing even remotely critical is written, or hype for a game or company written by the software manufactures themselves. Naturally they say their game is the best in the world.

These type of articles may increase your earnings, but for myself I am not going to subscribe to your magazine as I prefer to read either an honest review of a game or tips on strategy.
Stephen Geisinger
Nanuet, NY 10954

Try reading the next issue you buy a bit more carefully. Previews are designed to alert readers to new games. Critical appraisals follow in the reviews, as the editorial in the issue of which you complain clearly pointed out.

Rookie

First of all, thanks for a great magazine. Being a newcomer in the world of computer games, I have found myself lost with all the different games. Most of the trouble I've been having is how to decide on an NFL game. I want to buy them all (Dallas Cowboys fan of 26 years) but that is financially impossible. My question is: which offers the best qualities in these categories:-

- Graphics
- Playbook
- Draft
- Stats tracking on all 28 teams.

If you have reviews of Football games in previous issues please include the issue # so I can order them. I'm also interested in Civil War games so please recommend some.

Sean Adams
Aruada, CO 80004

*Best graphics: **Mike Ditka Football** (Accolade). Best playbook: **John Madden II** (EA). Best draft and stats tracking: **NFL Pro League Football** (Micro Sports) or **Micro League Football - The Coach's Challenge** (Micro League Sports). You may care to note that XOR are shortly to release **NFL Challenge De Luxe**, while Dynamix will be publishing **Front Page Football** next month.*

*Football games previously reviewed: **Joe Montana Football** (issue 8); **NFL Pro League Football**, **Playmaker Football**, **Micro League Football** (all issue 14); **Mike Ditka Ultimate Football** (issue 15); **NFL** (issue 19); **John Madden II** (issue 22).*

*The definitive Civrl War game has yet to be made. SSG made a series entitled **Decisive Battles of the American Civil War** which is worth checking out, as is SSI's **Rebel Charge at Chickamauga**.* Look out soon for ***The Road from Sumter to Appomattox*** *from Adanac Command Systems.*

Shell shock

I realise all game companies are going full steam for the IBM PC, but I'd like to know why **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** hasn't been released for the Amiga. I think it's a pretty good game but I'd rather not shell out money for a an IBM PC.
Lance Gifford
Scottsdale, AZ 85250

*I'd like a new car but I 'd rather not shell out for a Ferrari. Unfortunately, if you want to play **SWOTL** you'll have to shell out as it's not going to be released for the Amiga.*

I've asked Ferrari for a review copy, you never know your luck.

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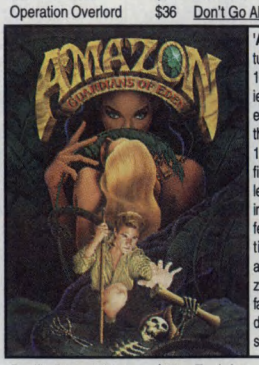
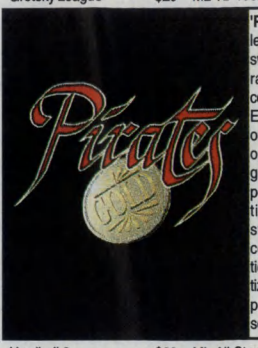
'STAR LEGIONS' is another in the Star Fleet series of space strategy simulations. You command more than 100 legions of battle hardened Krellan warriors in Battlecruisers, Deastroyers and troop transports. Features real time combat, state-of-the-art graphics animation and sound. **$38**

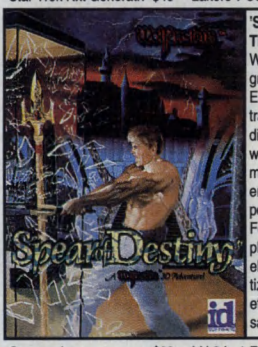


'AMAZON' recaptures the fun of the 1950's drive-in movies. Travel to unexplored regions of the Amazon, fight 10 foot ants, and find emeralds stolen by Cortez. Amazing cinematic effects such as multiple camera angles, flashbacks, zooms, pans, & fades. Features full digitized voices & sound effects. **$39**



'PIRATES GOLD' lets you become a swashbuckling pirate in the 17th century Caribbean. Expands on the original with more opportunities to gain treasure, power, and prestige. Features swordfighting & combat capabilities, realistic digitized speech, & support for all major sound boards. **$34**

'GAME MAKER' allows you to create 256 color VGA adventure and arcade games without programming. Features sound support, multiple levels per game, import images from .GIF files, character & monster animation, scrolling in all directions, add or subtract hit points, lives, score and money. **$68**



'SPEAR OF DESTINY' is a Castle Wolfenstein 3D graphic adventure. Encounter well trained enemy soldiers, secret doorways, gruesome mutants and powerful bosses in first person perspective. Features 20 complete floors, 4 levels of difficulty, digitized stereo sound effects, & multiple saved games. **$37**

'SPACEWARD HO!' takes you to the stars as you explore and conquer the galaxy. You allocate funds & resources to build armadas, inhabit & terraform planets, research new technologies. Features an adjustable galaxy size, number of players up to 19, network and modem play. **$38**

'PRO AUDIO SPECTRUM PLUS' features hi-fidelity recording & playback in 44kHz **stereo**, advanced 20 voice stereo synthesizer, high performance 16 bit interface, 4 watt per channel amp, built in SCSI interface, MIDI sequencer, waveform editor, four track music studio, & windows 3.1 drivers. **$139**

'CARRIERS AT WAR' brings to life six crucial carrier battles of WWII; Pearl Harbor, Coral Sea, Midway, Eastern Shores, Santa Cruz, and Great Marianas Turkey Shoot. Seek out and destroy enemy carriers, fleets, and air forces. Features hundreds of individually modeled ships & aircraft from that period. **$39**

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'TRISTAN PINBALL' brings you all the excitment of playing real pinball. Flip and nudge your way to the highest score possible using great features from traditional pinball games. Features authentic ball action, wild pinball devices, rocket flippers, thumper bumpers, multi-ball, extra ball, and stereo sound. **$39**

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'LINKS 386 PRO' offers **Super VGA** graphics and advanced features designed for your 386 or 486. New features include computer opponent, save game option that allows your friends to play against you in an existing game, pre-recorded games from worthy opponents, and many game modes. **$42**

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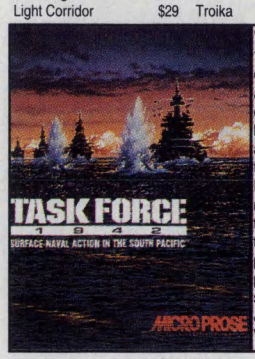

'TASK FORCE 1942' gives you a chance to command a fleet of destroyers, cruisers, and battleships against aggressive enemy forces in the South Pacific. Features night combat, realistic weather conditions, blinding explosions, flares, torpedoes, ability to send orders to ships & convoys, and VGA graphics. **$39**

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'VIRTUAL PILOT' is a flight yoke that mounts on your desk and plugs into your IBM compatible. Features left, right, front, & back views accesible at the touch of a button, flap & gear controls, tactile fire buttons under your thumbs, precise trim control, and thumb-screw terminals for easy installation. **$54**

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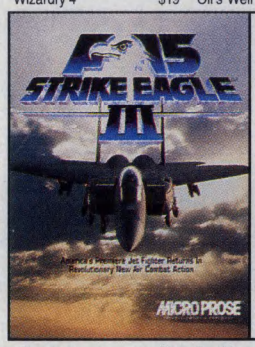

'F15 STRIKE EAGLE 3' will challenge even seasoned pilots. Includes a new visual system that blends 3D polygon and bit-mapped graphics. Features campaign mode, 2 player head-to-head by modem, and 2 player cooperative in separate planes or in the same F15. **$44**

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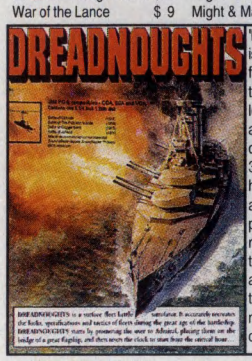
'FLIGHTSTICK' is one of the most popular joysticks available today. Features total 360 degree cursor control, greater durability, a contoured pistol grip handle with audio and tactile feedback firebuttons, and separate throttle control. **$37**



'DREADNOUGHTS' is a WWI surface fleet battle simulator. It recreates the look, specificatons, and tactics of fleet combat. Features 3D views, comprehensive manuals and sea charts, a potent English command parser, one or two player mode and computer controlled ships, gunnery and damage control. **$42**

'SECOND CONFLICT' is a windows game of interstellar strategy and conquest. Test your skill against friends or the computer in one of 6 exciting scenarios or create your own with the built in editor. Choose between warships, stealthships, missiles, & transports in your quest to rule the galaxy. **$34**

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'THEATRE OF WAR' is a real-time game of strategy and conquest on a chess-like board. Features Super VGA graphics in 640x480, ray-traced 3D game pieces, modem play, 1 or 2 player game, music that varies with the mood of the game, configurable game board up to 50x50 tiles. **←$32**
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'SEX OLYMPICS' combines sexual, tongue-in-cheek humor, adult graphics, unusual sound effects and an icon driven point-and-click interface to create a game that is a little different than your usual fare. Features 3 levels of game play, and objects that change location each time you play. **$24**

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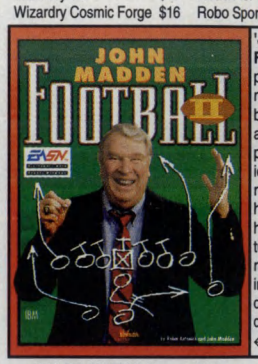

'JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL 2' improves on one of the most popular football games available with, play-by-play analysis, an icon menu, instant replay, and even help from Madden himself. Other features include player ratings, match-ups injuries, field conditions, & ability to design plays. **←$32**
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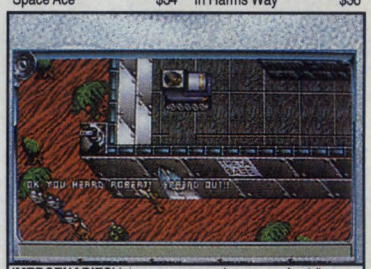

'MERCENARIES' lets you command a group of soldiers on interplanetary combat missions. Each mercenary, civilian, and alien has their own personality. Produce your own missions with the built in scenario editor. **BUY 2 GET 1 ←$38**

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'PATRIOT' is the definitive land warfare simulation for the PC. In this initial battleset, coalition forces meet with the defiant troops of Saddam Hussein. Command over 2000 units from either side. Features 256 color VGA graphics, state-of-the-art database, interface & mapping. **←$44**
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'PC SYMPHONY' is an 8 bit Adlib compatible sound card for your PC. Features 11-voice FM music, built in 4 watt power amplifier, simultaneous 9 voice, 6 melody, & 5 rhythm sound generation, hardware volume control to 4 ohm & 8 ohm speaker/earphone output, & internal speaker output. **$37**

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'MEDIA CONCEPT' is an 8 bit sound blaster compatible sound card. Features 11-voice FM music, digitized voice input, digitized voice output, full duplex MIDI interface, 4 watts per channel output, volume control, microphone and line in jacks, a joystock port, and Hardware decompression. **$84**

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'RAGNAROK' lets you experience the vast, unbounded world of Norse Mythology. Acquire the arcane skills of polymorph and transformation in order to defeat Surtr and his hordes of Demons. Includes 100 action-packed realms, over 200 magical artifacts, 200 distinct races, & VGA graphics. **$38**

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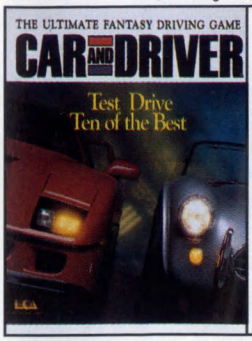

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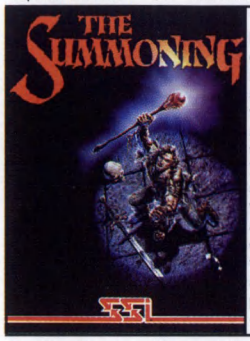

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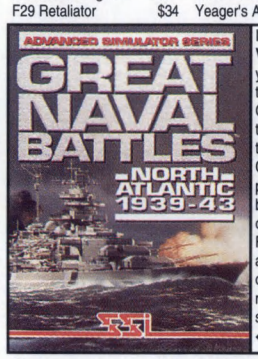

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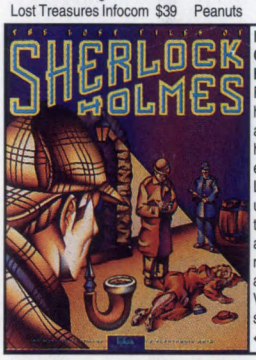

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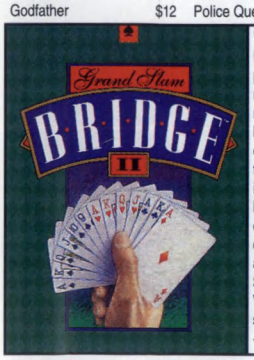

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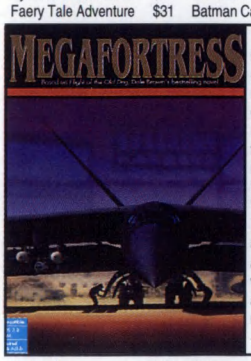

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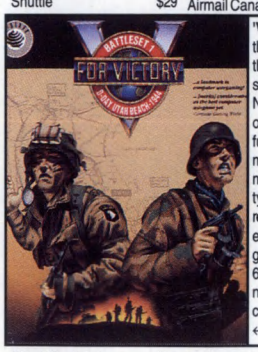

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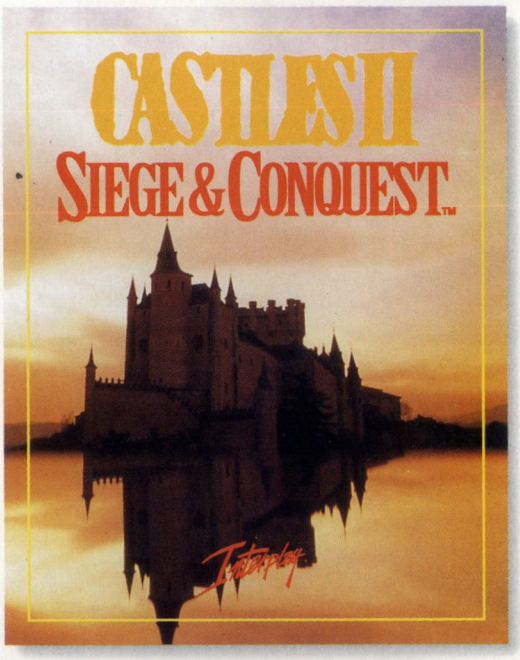

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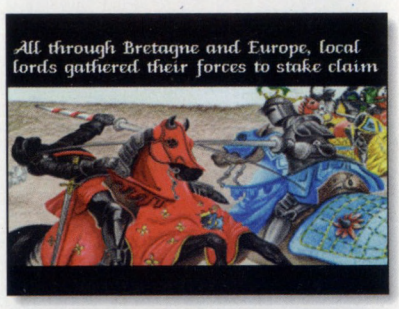

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